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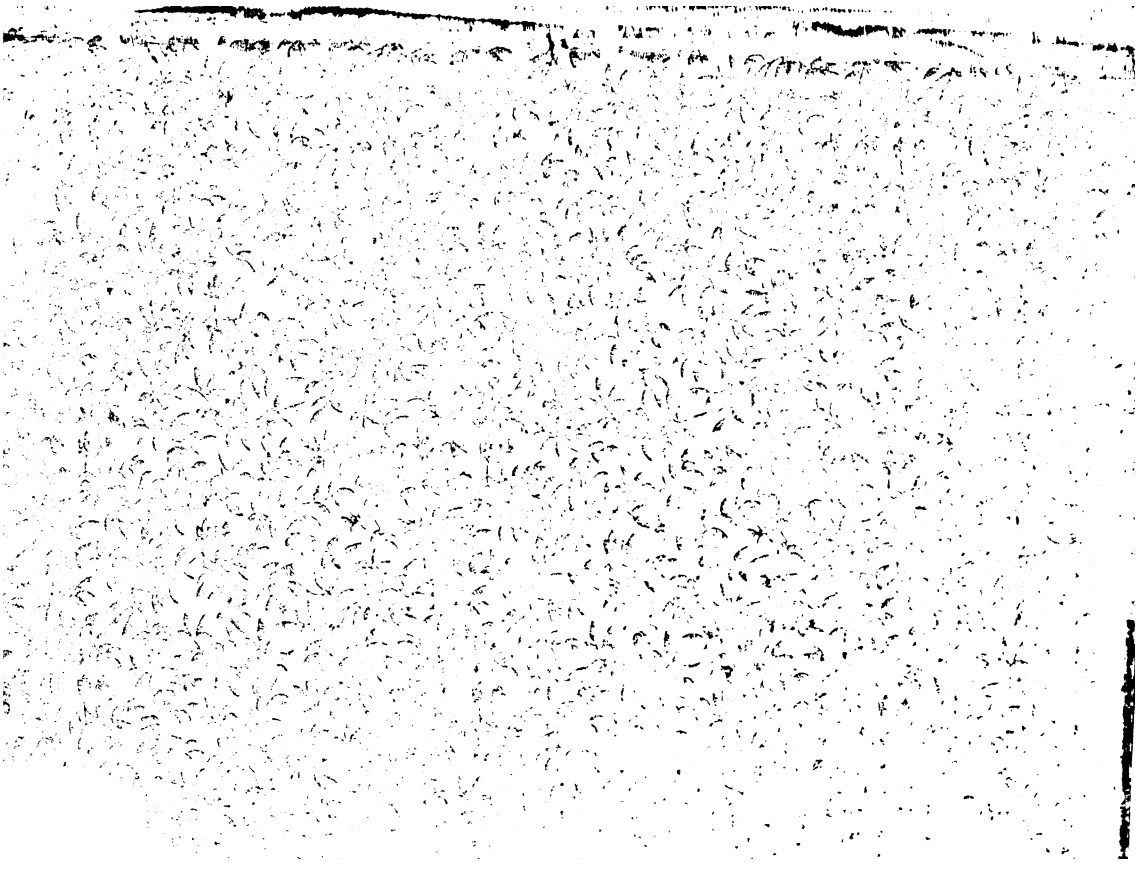

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CHRIST'S PLAN OF SALVATION.

Christ's Plan of Salvation.

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." . . . . . .

A BIBLE STUDY.

BY

SAMUEL F. COOK.

LANSING, MICH.

1896.

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Christ's Plan of Salvation.

"And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."—MATTHEW, 10-38.

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."—MATTHEW, 16-24.

"Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."—MARK, 8-34.

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."—LUKE, 9-23.

"And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."—LUKE, 14-27.

THE law given to Moses on the mount Sinai, made provision for a religion of works: an unceasing round of outward duties. He who realized that he had broken the law and needed forgiveness for his sin, might prove his contrition by bringing to the priest an offering whose burning fragrance might appeal to Heaven in his behalf. While this could avail to secure him the pardon he sought, when in the heart of the worshiper there was true

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repentance toward God, and an earnest intent to "lead a new life, following the commandments of God blameless," there is ample evidence that the Israelites, as a people, soon forgot all except the making of the offerings, with the lofty pageantry accompanying them, and failed in the heart portion of the worship and service. And so through all the years, and along the ages, they plodded on with the continual round of thank offerings, sin offerings, first fruits offerings, birth offerings, solemn feasts and days of rejoicing, in the attempt to obey the commands of their religion by the *doing* of those things laid down in the Mosaic law, and thus to prove a desire to be at peace with the one true God who had so wonderfully made of them a people.

The purposes of God in the mission of the long foretold Messiah were too divine for the comprehension of the average humanity prior to, as well as at the time of his coming. Thoroughly cured of the sin of idolatry as the result of the Babylonish captivity, the teachers of the law had added thereto a vast

number of observances and rules for living, obedience to which was urged upon the people with more earnestness than even the requirements of the law itself, and the religious teachings were based on the central conception that individual peace with the offended Deity, and His favor for the nation, of which so small a remnant was remaining, were to be secured only by the constant doing of certain things, and the equally constant refraining from other things. The underlying spiritual intent of the teachings of the law and the prophets seems to have been beyond their comprehension.

But when the fullness of time had come for the one great sacrificial atonement which had been shadowed forth in the law and proclaimed in the lofty imagery of the prophetic poets, the Christ made his advent, and "by his oblation of himself once offered," made "a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world." By this sacrifice so ample, Christ did away with the offerings and rites which were a necessary part of a system of salvation works, and inaugurated the reign of salvation by faith,

as the central essence of the gospel of love, as compared with the former dispensation of fear.

In the five similar passages which we are considering, Christ laid down with a wonderful precision of words, the doctrine of salvation by faith—the central conception of his mission. It is worthy of notice, that while Matthew and Luke each have two passages, and Mark one, setting forth the doctrines of self-abnegation and acceptance of the atonement as a necessary requisite to salvation, John, the beloved disciple, who more fully than any other of the sacred writers proclaimed the *love of God* for his fallen children, makes no allusion to this apparently important phase of the teaching of our Lord. It is still more noteworthy that not one of the epistles contains any reference to these declarations of Christ, nor do they set forth any line of thought by which we may be aided to a clear understanding of the teaching of the Master herein contained. Owing to this failure on the part of the early writers, it is not strange that these words of Christ have been so largely misconstrued, and even wrested into a foundation for the doctrines

they were, I am led to believe, intended to overthrow.

Following the third century of the christian era, there arose a class of ascetics and philosophical theorists, who seized on these words with a rare avidity, and from them, and the aid of their inner consciousness, evolved the doctrine of penance, which was so severely in vogue throughout the dark ages, and which to-day is one of the standard tenets of the Roman church.

The command of Christ that his followers take up their cross and follow him, is plainly prophetic and figurative. And yet, to the saints and martyrs of the early church, it had a sadly significant and literal meaning; for many, very many of them, bore to the place of their crucifixion the timbers upon which, and by means of which, their redeemed spirits were set free from the tenements of clay, and allowed "to depart and be with Christ." While it is evident that all of those who have named the name of Christ are not required to suffer torture for that name, and in defense of their faith, it is not to be doubted that it would

be the duty of each one of us, if thus put to the test, to attest with our lives the confidence we have in the adorable Redeemer. The command is not that we be crucified daily, but that we take up the cross daily. In the earlier years of the establishment of His kingdom upon earth, it seemed necessary that He should have many of these *strong* witnesses to the power of the gospel over death and the grave, but since it has become evident that death has no terrors for those who confess the Lord Christ, the rage for their blood has ceased, and the foes of the christian are chiefly those of his own heart.

The Romish doctrine of penance for sins has had no little influence upon the dogmatism of the Protestant churches, and ever and anon crops out as well in the instructions of the pulpit as in the lives of those who are striving to "make their calling and election sure." This doctrine of penance is based on the idea that the body is the home of sin: that were the spirit free from the body, the incentives to evil would be so far removed as that the spirit might aspire to absolute purity. But since it

is not lawful to throw off the body and free the spirit from its control, it was taught that the body should be so abased and tortured as that the spirit should be able to gain the mastery. With this view, during the dark ages, the church taught that the body must be made to suffer, in order that through that suffering it might be purified. To this end the devotee practiced scourgings, severe, and sometimes barbarous; the coarsest kinds of food were used, and very little even of that, taken; a wire shirt was worn; he slept on a bed of stone or on a filthy pallet of straw; he made pilgrimages to shrines, going long distances upon his knees, or entirely prostrate upon the earth, drew himself along in imitation of a vile worm. But this became, whatever it may have been to its founders, a religion of works. The devotee came by the natural processes of the human mind, to take pride in his outward abasement. There was lacking that humility of the heart of which his abuse of the body was but an outward indication. Although there was an evident crucifixion of the body, the heart retained its inherent pride.

Any effort after the performance of good works, is but a sure evidence of the unwillingness to repose implicit confidence in the atonement of Christ, and its efficacy to accomplish the present and eternal salvation of the soul. It is a certain indication that he who thus labors to perform meritorious acts, is inclined to attempt thereby to work out his own purification and salvation, as though fearing that God and His Son are unable to bring about so grand a result. Or else, governed by an insatiate pride, he scorns to leave so great a work to God alone, but proposes to bring about his own redemption by the doing of those things which he knows to be right in themselves, and by sedulously abstaining from those things which his moral sense and the law of God indicate to him are wrong. But this mode of procedure is not in accord with the gospel of Christ.

That we should feel our unworthiness of God's mercies is right; that we should realize the depth to which we have fallen, in common with all mankind, is a necessity; that we should confess to God our manifold sins and wicked-

ness, our proneness to evil, and the need we have of divine assistance, is also a necessity; but if we claim for this any virtue, we are sadly in error.

In the several passages which we are discussing, our Lord lays down three conditions requisite, and as I apprehend, three conditions absolutely requisite, to a conformance to the plan of God for the salvation of man. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." Here are presented as necessary, denial of self, taking up of the cross, and following after Him.

First then, what did the Savior intend when he said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself?" In what does this denial of self consist? The English word deny, as used in this place, seems to me to have been very largely misconstrued. The Greek word used by our Lord signifies "to deny utterly." Like very many other words in our language, this word "deny" has a wide variety of signification. If I mistake not, it has usually been taken to mean, in these passages, that to deny

one's self, is to decline the gratification of appetites and desires; in other words, to practice what is termed "self denial." But it must be remembered that Christ is here stating the conditions of salvation. Under the Mosaic law, this was to be accomplished only by the intermediary of offerings upon the altar, after the shedding of the blood of the victim. Under the new dispensation, the offering having been made once for all, it only became necessary for the truly penitent to avail himself of the results of that offering "made once for all, for the sins of the whole world." But now if we construe this word "deny," as bearing in these passages, one of the other proper significations, viz., to disclaim connection with, or to disclaim responsibility for, so that the passage might read, "If any man will come after me, let him disclaim any connection with the bringing about his salvation," we shall gain an understanding of these passages which will be in accord not only with the other teachings of the gospel, but gain an added light on the true signification of the taking up of the cross.

The practice of self-denial, as a means of

working out our salvation, is not at all in accord with the plan of the gospel for the redemption of man. Self-denials, as a result of being redeemed, and of the promptings of the divine spirit within us, are no doubt, a part of a true following of Christ. Self-denials, practiced as a means to an end, are sure to result in a self satisfied condition of the mind and heart, since having done those things which are distasteful to us, we are too apt to feel that we have done something for which we ought to be rewarded.

If then we would come after Christ, let us deny that we are able in any way to aid in the redemption of our souls, or to make our lives in accord with the mind of Christ; let us disclaim any responsibility in the matter; let us deny the proposition that it is possible for us to aid in our salvation. In other words, let us agree that only God alone is competent to accomplish the salvation of our souls, and bring us at the last to a home with Him. He has undertaken for us; let us deny ourselves in this matter, and accept His proffered aid.

But this denying of ourselves is not so easy

or so simple as may be supposed. It comes squarely athwart the pride and independence of the human heart. To acknowledge that we are sinners, is bad enough, but to acknowledge that we are in no way competent to save ourselves, to change our lives so as that they shall be in accord with the laws of right, to live in accord with those laws, and to make our way to the celestial city by our own efforts, and ascend to the presence of the Father as a result of having earned a right to be there, is not an easy thing to do. Especially is this true of a man full of manly vigor, and intent on being thoroughly a man. Such an one scorns assistance in the every day affairs of life, and prides himself on his ability to meet any of the mischances which befall, with steady nerve and unflinching purpose. Feeling strong in himself he feels able to bring his tempers, passions, appetites, under proper control, and to live a life filled with the christian graces. How shall such an one bring himself to acknowledge that he is incapable of at least aiding in the work of his salvation? To deny himself, and acknowledge that he must be the bene-

ficiary of the atonement, without having anything of his own to place on the credit side of the account, is too debasing for a man who feels his nobleness, and his ability to cope with the greatest difficulties. But Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself:" and that word deny is in the imperative mood.

Let us now inquire what our Lord meant when he said, "and take up his cross." The word used by the evangelists, and which is translated "cross," meant primarily, a stake, or a pole; and came to be used as the name of the two joined pieces of timber on which the Romans were accustomed to nail their criminal offenders, and then place in an upright position, while the miserable victim suffered untold torture which resulted finally in his death. The word used by our writers, and which is translated "let him take up," contains no idea of bearing, as the carrying a load, but rather that he who will come after Christ must take up, or set up his cross. In one view of this declaration of Christ, it was prophetic. Jesus had not yet paid the penalty for the sins of the

human race, by an expiation on the cross, and I apprehend that not one of those who heard him utter these words, had at the time, any conception of their meaning. What was this cross that those who will come after Christ, must take up? The usual conception of the meaning of this command, is, I apprehend, as was shown by some one of the great artists of the middle ages, as a man struggling along a path bearing on his back a heavy cross, the timbers of which were wholly out of proportion to the size of the man. The man was shown as bending so far forward as that his hands might touch the ground in front of him, were they not engaged in the struggle to hold the heavy timbers upon his back. The artist depicted his cross bearer as a man of finest athletic build, his muscles standing out bold and strong; but so heavy was the load he was carrying that those muscles were knotted under the fearful strain which they were undergoing, even the muscles of the head and face giving evidence of the almost overpowering load under which he was being weighed down, while the sweat stood in great drops upon his

brow, thus showing an intensity of pain.

The cross which our Lord commands us to take up, if we would come after him, is no such heavy load which we are to carry, as was there shown. More than this, let us clearly realize that it would be an unwarrantable torture of the words of Christ, to draw therefrom any idea of carrying any load at all. The word means simply, to lift up, to set up. It is not that we are to take up a load and carry it; we are to lift up our cross, set it up, and then follow Christ.

Not infrequently we hear christians speak of the heavy crosses they have been called upon to bear, when referring to some of the ordinary every day providences which befall the bad and good alike. Others speak of the bereavement of friends, as crosses which they find it difficult to bear. Others, when speaking of the divers temptations which beset them, call them heavy crosses,—burdens which weigh them down and cause them to sink under the load. Christ said that the burden which he imposed on his followers, is light. Surely, those things which are common to the race,

and in no way peculiar to the followers of Christ, cannot be regarded as crosses. Those who have no regard for God, have their friends taken from them; those who disdain to claim the atonement of Christ in their behalf, endure the loss of property, and suffer severely thereby; even those who are positively wicked, are beset with temptations, to which they usually yield, but they are for all that temptations as really as any which a christian has to withstand; those who are making a hard struggle to accomplish their own salvation by right living, without any aid from the Redeemer of the race, suffer defamation of character and the buffetings of the evil one as severe as any which come to those who put their confidence, trust and hope in the promises of God through His Son. Neither can we regard those providences which befall us, and which a keen perception of the intent of our loving Father in Heaven readily sees are for the purposes of discipline and correction, as in any sense a lifting or taking up of the cross. Those who scorn to bow in obedience to the law of God receive similar chidings and reproof for their

misdeeds, but pay no heed thereto, unless it be with their muttered curses; while the true christian heeds the reproof, and thanks God that he is counted worthy to be reminded of his shortcomings.

Not infrequently, pastors exhort their people to bear the cross, by the taking part in the exercises of the social meetings,—in audible prayer, and in giving testimony to the truths of the gospel. Not infrequently, we hear people in the exercises of the social meetings, avow their willingness to bear the cross, their bearing of the cross consisting of the declaration that they are striving to be christians, and asking for the prayers of their fellows. While all these exercises of the social meetings are right, proper, and to some extent necessary, we cannot find that they are more than remotely connected with the lifting up of the cross. These exercises are spoken of as difficult of accomplishment, and hence as heavy crosses to bear. While a testimony to the efficacy of the atonement is a lifting up of the cross, in the sense which the word in the original will allow, viz., to extoll, it cannot be that even the

extolling of the great author and finisher of our salvation can be a burden to those who have tasted and know the truths of Christ's gospel. Would it be any less difficult for those who feel that it is a heavy load for them to rise to their feet and tell to those in full sympathy with them what they know of the power of redeeming love, than it would be to speak in the same manner on any other subject? I think not. Very few out of the whole number of our people feel at all at home and free with words, when on their feet in a public assembly. Most of us if called on for our opinions on any of the subjects of general interest, in such a manner as to make it proper to rise to our feet and give expression to thought, would find that we suffered under the same feeling of diffidence, and experienced the same lack of words to express ourselves. Our natural diffidence, and failure to familiarize ourselves with public speaking and thinking on our feet, cannot, I think, be urged as creating a burden to be borne and regarded as a christian duty.

Just here, I must indulge in a parenthesis.

Why is it regarded as a difficult thing, to rise in a gathering of christians, all of them in sympathy, all striving to follow Christ, all beset with the same difficulties, doubts and fears, and give expression to our experiences in the christian life? An illustration suggests itself to me as applicable in this instance. If any one of us had been very sick, in such manner as that the very best of medical assistance had been necessary, and under that assistance recovery had been made, would there be any hesitation or lack of words in speaking the praise of the doctor whose skill had brought us through? Would it be a burden to speak to our friends of his skill, and of our gratitude not only to him, but that his aid had been sought by our friends in our behalf? But we were very sick with sin; sicker by far than we appreciated. There was no help for us. We were lost. Ruined by the fall, we were still farther undone by the trend of our own hearts toward evil. But God himself undertook for us. He against whom we had sinned and done wickedly, himself brought salvation nigh. The triune God sent to earth the second

person in the Trinity, to bring us back into unison with the mind of God. "To earth the great Redeemer came, that we might come to Heaven." On Calvary He paid the debt, the debt beyond compare, even the debt of the whole human race, and made it possible, if we will but accept the proffered benefit, that we may yet be the sons of the Lord Almighty. And yet, how many of us who have vowed to accept the proffered mercy, who have solemnly on bended knees promised to follow Christ, lifting up our cross, hesitate and shrink from declaring our faith and love for Him who has bought us with his own blood, even the blood shed on Calvary's rugged mount. We certainly would not treat any earthly friend so ill.

But to return to our argument. It will be noticed that while three of our text passages, one each from Matthew, Mark and Luke are stated in the conditional form, two of them, one from Matthew and one from Luke, state the proposition positively. It may be noted also, that while the passages which are stated in the conditional form, "If any man will come after me," have also the command, "let him

deny himself;" while those which are in the positive form, are also in the negative, and contain no mention of the necessity for the exercise of self abnegation in the matter of our salvation. Matthew says, 10:38, "And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me;" and Luke, 14:27 says, "And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." The word used by Matthew in the last passage mentioned, signifies to take, in the sense of grasping, but not in any way does it contain the idea of carrying, or bearing up under. In the latter passage from Luke, the word which is translated "doth bear," properly signifies "to lift up, to raise, and hence metaphorically to praise, to laud."

It should not be forgotten that in each of the passages we are discussing, the cross which is to be lifted up, is an individual cross, and the several passages might very properly have been rendered, "and take up his own cross."

We come now to consider the question as to what our Lord meant when he used the word "cross" in the sayings recorded in our several

texts. We think that we may justly assume that no passage of scripture can be justly construed except by a comparison with all others of like import, and with the sacred writings as a whole. In our studies of these texts, we have endeavored to adhere to this rule. We find that under the Mosaic law, without the shedding of blood there was no remission of sins. We find that it was obligatory for each individual, when he would crave the pardon which he felt himself to need, when he would endeavor to win the favor of his offended God, that he must himself bring an animal, without spot or blemish, to the priest, who there before the alter, slew the victim, and while the penitent offered his prayers that his offering might be accepted, and that the pardon asked might be granted, the priest offered the flesh upon the altar, having first sprinkled the blood thereon. The old dispensation was in all respects a type of the new.

And yet, while under the old dispensation, the penitent must needs approach and make his plea by the aid of a priest, under the new, as is shown in our texts, he must take up his own

cross or offerings, and appear before God in his own person and make his own plea in abatement of the penalty for sins. The atonement on the cross was not for the collective human race, but for them individually; for each one in his separate person. While Christ died for us, he died for you, for me. If then we would come after Christ, we must take our offering, even Him who was slain, as a lamb without spot, an offering which cannot be refused at the throne of high Heaven. If we would come after Christ, we must disclaim any ability or even disposition to save ourselves, and take up the plea of the sacrifice made on the cross for us. Appearing before God with hearts truly yearning after His favor, and presenting as our only claim for the divine favor the sacrifice made upon the cross, abjuring every other claim to the divine mercy, and trusting in that alone, we may be assured that we shall be accepted through the merit of the adorable Redeemer. And this we must do daily. It is not enough that once, or even occasionally, we present our offering, even the atonement made by God's own Son, for us and

in our stead; we must present our plea, we must, denying ourselves in the matter, lift up and lay before the Lord, the offering made in our stead and on our behalf, daily. It must be an every day exercise. Since under the Mosaic law none were allowed to appear before God to ask his favor, empty handed, no more may we. Nor may the offering be one of our own choosing. The law of Moses specified the offering to be brought and presented in each case of guilt or thankfulness; the law of Christ specifies that we shall present as our plea for recognition, either when we ask forgiveness for our transgressions, or ascribe our praises to the triune God for His manifold mercies to usward, the offering of Himself once made, even His death upon the cross, at each approach we make to the mercy seat. But these approaches are to be made every day. It is not enough that we bow in the public assembly on the Sabbath day, that at certain fixed times and occasions we ask the pardon we need, lifting up our offering of the atonement as our only plea; we must every day present ourselves, our plea and our offer-

ing, if we are at all intent on complying with the conditions under which we may hope to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

This taking up of the cross in such manner as to meet the demands of the gospel, is a matter of no slight import; it is a personal humiliation beyond compare. Though we deny ourselves, rating our own ability in the task of salvation as nothing, and feel desirous of placing ourselves in the hands of God, and of trusting to his divine clemency for salvation, we are not, by this, severely belittling ourselves in our own estimation, and the humiliation is not in any such degree as is that of the taking up of the cross. Jesus made expiation for our guilt, by a death on the cross. But it must not be forgotten that a death on the cross was the most ignominious of any that were in vogue at that time. It was the method of execution for the most abandoned of their criminals, the lowest of the malefactors. Jesus was condemned to death upon the cross for the very purpose of emphasizing his low character in their estimation, as compared with

his own claim that he was a king. The apostle says of him,—Phil., 2 : 7,—that he "made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Is it a matter of slight import, think you, that we, men and women, endowed with powers and attributes second only to our Maker, indeed made in His own image, must accept as our mediator with the injured Deity, the person of one who suffered with malefactors the most ignominious of deaths?

But if we humble ourselves to the degree that we earnestly avow our desire to be made partakers of the benefit of Christ's death and suffering, is our humiliation equal to that endured by Jesus in our behalf? The second person in the Holy Trinity, the Son, and hence heir of the Creator of the universe, in all the elements of divinity, coequal with the Father and in perfect accord with Him, so humbled himself that he took upon him the form of one of the common people, associated with the

ignorant and those outside of the upper classes of the time, devoted his time to aiding the poor, teaching the ignorant, and finally as a low class criminal, suffered the death of the cross. Was ever any love like this?

If now we would come after Christ, we must, denying any share in the work of redemption on our own part, take up the cross of acceptance of the mediation of our Redeemer, Christ, making our only plea in this behalf, that for us the Saviour died; we must accept the death on the cross as our individual atonement, and daily, lifting up the cross before the throne of Heaven, as the priests of old lifted the offerings, and laid them out on the altar, claim the acceptance of our offering in accordance with the promise left us that "him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."

Do the conditions of salvation through Christ seem harsh? If you have sinned grievously against your neighbor, one who has been accustomed to befriend you in every way, one who has looked after your interests, perchance one who has actually saved your life, and whose

very honor, in your ungratefulness, you had assailed, would you think to be restored to his kindly regard except under such conditions as he might deem necessary to the preservation of his honor? Methinks that under such circumstances no conditions could be too severe. But the case between humanity and God was worse even than our supposed case; can any conditions which Our Heavenly Father has found necessary to impose, be regarded as too severe?

Perhaps our kind Father deemed this extreme humiliation on our part necessary, in order to test the sincerity of our approach to Him. Had He but made a royal road for us to travel, in our endeavor to reach Him, we could not so certainly evince our sense of our need of help from on High. Having shown an intensity of love for His fallen creatures, almost incomprehensible in degree, by the gift of a very part of himself as an offering for our sins, it certainly behooves us to be ready to evince our appreciation for this love so great, by the most perfect compliance with the conditions He has imposed, which are that we deny ourselves as

agents in the matter of salvation, and make use of the atonement by lifting up the fact of the pardon purchased for us on the cross, and daily appearing before Him with our sacrifice and our plea in our behalf. In further proof of our sincerity, we are not to be content with the justifying grace bestowed in answer to our first approaches to Him, but each day we are to feel the urgent necessity for the reapplication of the Redeemer's merits, and feeling thus, lift up, daily, the cross with all its hallowed influences and benefits.

If now we have, urged thereto by a desire to come after Christ, been able to make full and complete denial of ourselves in regard to the bringing about of our salvation from the thralldom of sin which has bound us, and have been able to humble ourselves so that we have made acceptance of the proffered mercy, even the atonement made for us on Calvary, and have lifted up our cross, even lifting the expiation paid by the adorable Redeemer in our behalf, up before the throne of the Infinite mercy, and have been made to know that the sacrifice so great was accepted in our behalf,

it is but meet and right, and it is our bounden duty, henceforth to follow Christ, according to his command. A royal potentate, the Son Most High of the King of Kings, he denied himself, and made himself of no reputation, and still further to benefit us, he humbled himself, even to die upon the cross, covered with ignominy and shame. Can He ask less from us than that we follow Him, and follow Him daily? Can we claim any immunity from the terms laid down in our texts? Shall we refuse to acknowledge our inability to save ourselves, or to apply in our behalf the sacrifice so wonderfully great, made by the loving Redeemer? But in our attempts to follow Christ, let us not forget that we are to be like him; that we are to have the mind of Christ, the spirit of Christ, the compassion of Christ. We should not fail to give heed to all his suggestions for holy doing and holy living. We should not for a moment forget that Jesus devoted the greater portion of his time to the poor; relieving their necessities, healing their sicknesses and teaching them the way of life. Let us not fail to remember and act on the injunction that we

love our neighbor as ourselves, in full appreciation of the declaration of the scripture that "love is the fulfilling of the law."

To sum up this study of the true signification of the several passages we have been considering, I would suggest the following explanatory rendering thereof: If any man will come after me, let him disclaim anything on his own part as in any way contributing toward his salvation, and let him set up in his behalf the atonement which I am to make on the cross, presenting that as his own personal sacrifice, and let him follow after me in obedience to my teachings and the rule of my life.

A true and full compliance with the rule here laid down, can result only in a full salvation by faith, and not by works. The mind and heart which comprehends the true import of these sayings of our Lord, is at once compelled to assent to the fact that faith, and faith alone, is the key that will unlock the realms of the blest and spread them out before his enraptured vision; that faith in the verities of God's word, is the one great and only necessity for an experience of those blessings which are

promised to those who put their confidence therein. But since it is "with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness," a mental acceptance of the plan of salvation as laid down in the Word, will not suffice. A mere mental assent to the proposition that we cannot save ourselves, and that if saved at all, it must be by some power outside of and greater than ourselves, is not an equivalent for the denial required by our Lord in his command. A mental belief in the facts of the great atonement, and an acquiescence in the doctrine of salvation by faith, will not secure to us the results which are only promised to faithful followers, viz.: the forgiveness of our sins, and a knowledge of the fact that we have been accepted into the family of God. "The devils believe and tremble," and so do men.

Let me urge you then to cease doing right as a means of securing the favor of God, but let your doing of those things which are right be the outgushing of your love for Christ and for your neighbor; a spontaneous proof that you, having denied yourself and lifted up your cross, have received your proof of the accept-

ance of the offering made, and that you are following your Redeemer in the doing of those things which since his ascension to the right hand of the Father, he has left for his children here on earth to do for him.

When you shall have comprehended the true import of the words of the Lord Jesus which we have been examining, you will cease to think or speak of the cross as a load to be borne along a rugged road with great difficulty, and with the odds against your ability to carry it to your hoped for destination; but rather you will come to think and speak of the cross as a joyous exercise in the merit of the atonement, which daily you present at the throne of grace as your only plea for notice and acceptance, and through which you are given to know that you are accepted, that your sins are pardoned, that you are on terms of intimacy with the Father through His adorable Son, that you are an heir of God, and a joint heir with Jesus Christ, to an inheritance with them that are sanctified. And further, be assured that if you have loads to carry, it is time that you examine yourselves and determine wherefore you are

chastened. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." When you are loaded down with the corrections of the Lord, fail not to hasten to your altar of prayer, and there renouncing yourself in humble submission to His will, lift up your cross, even the atonement, as your plea for pardon, for relief. Rely on this and on this alone. He has promised to accept the plea; make it unreservedly, and the loads which oppress you, shall vanish from your sight as the morning dew under the rays of a brilliant sun.

"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God."

THE PRAYER OF THE PUBLICAN.

The Prayer of the Publican.

What is Yours?

"God be merciful to me a sinner."

A BIBLE STUDY.

BY

SAMUEL F. COOK.

LANSING, MICH.,
1896.

PRESS OF THOMPSON & VANBUREN,

LANSING, MICH.

The Prayer of the Publican.

"GOD BE MERCIFUL TO ME A SINNER."—LUKE 18, part of the 15th verse.

Throughout all the years, the saying of those who heard him that "never man spake like this man," has proven true of all the words and teachings of the Lord, Christ. In his words alone, as recorded by his chosen apostles, is set forth the whole scheme of life and godliness, and the plan of salvation is made so plain that "wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." But the teaching of Christ, and the plan of salvation as made known by him, were then as now, in direct opposition to the thought, opinion and teachings of the time, the doctrines of the learned, and more than all, in opposition to the disposition of the human heart and mind.

The vast multitudes who crowded to hear

our Lord, in his daily ministrations, were a part of the dense population which crowded the hills and valleys of Palestine with a teeming life, and the activities of business, as business was carried on in those days. His audiences comprehended not only the laboring classes, to whom anything of learning was a matter of wonder, but among those who listened to his words, were those who were acquainted with all the learning of that remote age, and were ripe scholars in the fields of abstract thought. The Jewish synagogues of that day were well provided with teachers of high rank and ability,—men who had devoted their lives to the study of the law, and the exposition of the rites, ceremonials and duties enjoined by the Levitical code. With the text of the "law and the prophets," they may be believed to have had a most perfect acquaintance; and yet so blinded were their conceptions of the truth, by their intense humanity, that we are led to understand by the sayings of Jesus that they had lost sight entirely of the spirit of the law, while teachers and people alike were the blind followers of the traditions

of the fathers, following on in the ruts of thought and action in which those before them had trod, and hoping only, by a fair observance of the outward works enjoined by the Mosaic dispensation, to arrive at the haven of eternal happiness.

But Christ came to proclaim a new gospel, —a religion not of forms and observances, but a religion of the heart. His teachings were in direct opposition to the received opinions, and the writings of the fathers. His was indeed a new dispensation. He gave a new interpretation to the sayings of the prophets, and even the Jewish history received from him a new meaning and significance. He had come to "fulfill the law and the prophets," and in the fulfillment he gave an interpretation of the sacred writings very largely in contradiction of the received teachings and beliefs regarding them.

It may be a little difficult for us who believe in the coming of the Messiah, his mission, death, resurrection and ascension "to the bosom of the Father, where he had been from the foundation of the world," to appreciate the

difficulties under which the Jewish mind labored at the time of the advent. They had been taught to look for a Messiah, but he was to be a temporal ruler, who, after the manner of the ancient judges, should deliver the nation from the irksomeness of foreign domination, and should set up a kingdom which should surpass the splendors of Solomon's reign as much as that monarch surpassed the other kingdoms of the eastern world. They had entirely failed to see and appreciate the spiritual significance of the grand poetic imagery with which the prophets, with all the halo of oriental word painting, had given expression to their visions of the redemption of fallen humanity; and their minds had been so gross as to discover nothing therein but a dry detail of the promised greatness of the Jewish nation.

It was under circumstances such as these that the Messiah made his appearance among the chosen people of God, for the purpose of making good his promise made to Abraham that in his "seed shall all the nations of the earth be blest." In stern combat with all the teachings and beliefs of the times, as well as

in opposition to the traditions of the fathers, our Lord uttered the notable parable from which our text is taken. That we may have a clear understanding of the connection of thought, let us for a few moments consider the parable it its entirety.

"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself: 'God I thank thee that I am not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other."

The two men who are represented in this parable as worshipers, were, to the common understanding, types of the two extremes of moral character; and the Pharisee, the one above all others, who by his extreme piety and correct living, was most certain to gain the good will and sanction of the Most High. As

a sect, the Pharisees were the models of the virtues, moral and religious. So correct were their lives that this typical individual had no occasion to bemoan his wickedness, or ask for any favors or assistance from the object of his adoration. Unaided, he was accomplishing his own salvation. Or to use the more modern term for that condition of mind and heart, he was thoroughly engaged in "working out his own salvation,"—not indeed with any fear and trembling, but by the good deeds which made up the sum of his life, and which he expected would gain for him the approbation of the Jehovah he professed to worship, but who, all unsuspected by him, was He "who knoweth the thoughts and intents of the heart." This Pharisee was thoroughly satisfied with himself, and evidently regarded it as his due that God should recognize his goodness, and take into account his fastings and tithes,—especially the tithes, by means of which, in accordance with the prevalent beliefs, he was to, in a degree, purchase his right to sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the presence of the Father.

This Pharisee thanked God that he was not "as other men, or even as this publican." To the Jewish mind, the publican was the synonym for all that was dishonest, low and vile. They were the tax gatherers on behalf of the Roman government, and as such were heartily hated. The methods of taxation were such that it was in the power of the publicans to grind the people with their demands beyond the limits of endurance, even to the point of impoverishment; and from their demands there was no appeal. But because they had this power, it is not necessary for us to believe that there were none who performed their duties in strict compliance with their instructions. But since taxes are always odious, and the power of the tax gatherers was so nearly unlimited, while some were known to enrich themselves beyond the measure of honorable official action, the whole class had fallen under the ban; and even when a Jew undertook the office of a tax gatherer, he became to his own people as much an outcast as the worst of the gentile races. So low were they regarded by good society that it was one of

the reproaches which the Jews cast at Jesus, that he partook of the hospitalities of publicans and sinners—the two designations signifying to them those who were moral and religious outcasts.

Among his other causes for thankfulness, then, this Pharisee seeing a publican standing in a far off corner of the temple, was glad that he was not such an one as he. He was pleased to note that he was not an extortioner, and consequently the common charge against the publicans could not be laid at his door. We should not fail to notice the peculiar expression used by our Lord in describing the prayer of the Pharisee; he says, "the Pharisee stood and prayed thus *with himself*." In other words, although he was in God's holy temple, and to the eyes of others was engaged in devout worship of the one true God, and although his words had the semblance of a prayer, he was simply indulging in a speech of self gratulation, which did not reach the ear of the Father of us all, but fell so far short as to have been merely a soliloquy of the Pharisee with himself. Do any of us ever give

utterance to prayers which fall so short as this, resulting only in pleasing ourselves, and perchance a few listeners?

The publican entered the sacred precincts of the temple with a far different spirit. His heart was burdened with a weight of sin, and he approached the dwelling of the Most High with slow and hesitating step, fearing that his sins had cut him off from the right to appeal to God for the succor which he felt deeply that he needed. He had no good works to plead. For aught we know, he may have been as upright in his life as was the self conscious Pharisee, who thanked God that he was not like this publican. But the publican had no comparisons to make. He was intent on gaining for himself that mercy, without which he felt that he was lost. So diffident was he in his approach that he did not deign to take a prominent position in the temple,—a front pew,—but standing afar off, in some one of the dark recesses not far from the temple entrance, he invoked the Divine aid. Feeling his lost condition and his need for help from on high, and knowing and fearing the justice of his

Maker, he did not so much as lift his eyes toward heaven, but with downcast head and heaving breast, he exclaimed, in the agony of his spirit, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

It is this simple, although wonderfully comprehensive prayer, to which I wish to call your thoughtful attention. The invocation "God," comprehends more than all the volumes of theology. It is at once a confession of a belief in the Divine power and attributes. At the same time it is a confession of weakness. It is an admission that the suppliant is in need of aid. It is a confession that aid is craved from a higher, holier power. It is the appeal of a soul for *help*. And that soul cries for mercy. Mercy, Mercy, is its only request. Mercy, it must have. "God, be merciful." The publican appealed to Him who alone can be merciful, —to the very fountain of mercy,—for the mercy which he felt that he must have. Nor did he fail to state the reason for his request for mercy. "Be merciful to me a sinner." He admits his guilt. He offers no extenuating circumstances in abatement. He acknowledges himself a sinner, and hence undone without

the mercy he seeks. He makes no mention of any good deed whatever that he has done; and yet it is scarcely to be supposed that he had been so utterly bad as that nothing of good could be found in him. If, indeed, such were the case, we cannot well understand how he should be a penitent suppliant at the feet of Divine mercy. But he had come to realize, what indeed is true, that good deeds are as filthy rags, until he could place himself by the aid of the mercy he sought on terms of justification with the just and holy God, who sees and knows the thoughts and intents of the inmost heart. In the very anguish of his spirit, he smites upon his breast. His woe is indeed painful. He is a sinner. And with his heart borne down with the knowledge that he has separated himself from the Father and giver of all good,—that he is a sinner,—he smites on his breast, as he cries out in his distress, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

What more could he say? What more could be said? This cry to Heaven for relief from the "wounds which sin has made" is a perfect prayer, in all that a proper conception

of a prayer includes. Here is adoration, supplication, confession. There is also in these words of the publican an indication of deep feeling; of the extreme of earnestness. These are not the words of a lifeless form, but the outpouring of a truly penitent heart, profoundly earnest in seeking, imploring, the Divine mercy and help from on high.

Indeed, it is not strange that our Lord, in closing this parable, assured his hearers that "this man went down to his house justified rather than the other." The Pharisee, proud of his good deeds, of his faithful attention to the letter of the law and of the observances laid down in the writings of the fathers, together with the teachings of the religious traditions, was in no condition to acknowledge his need of Divine aid. He could not bring himself to feel other than satisfied with his condition. He was daily engaged in those acts of service and devotion which rendered him, to his mind, and in accord with the teachings of the time, a very good man. Nor have we any occasion to doubt that in his outward life he was correct in every detail. He was

engaged in working out his salvation by means of refraining from evil deeds, and by the faithful support of the church as well as by his religious acts of devotion in his fasts twice a week. He gave to the church the tithes laid down in the law, of all that he possessed. But at the same time he was in "the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity." He was engaged in the work of saving himself, instead of relying on the power of God to accomplish that great result. His beliefs were not at variance with the law or the prophets; but he had failed, in common with his people, to comprehend the fact that it is those who worship God in spirit who are able to approach close to Him and receive that aid and comfort which frail humanity requires in order to make any headway against the deceits of its wicked heart.

But in this prayer of the publican is shown the doctrine of justification by faith, and the uselessness of any attempt to save ourselves. This man had come to realize that he could not make any headway against the human frailties with which he was beset, and going

up to the temple, in order that he might thus be nearer to the mercy seat, he yielded up all claim to any ability to even aid in his salvation, and cried to God for mercy. He had arrived at that point in his religious experience when, convicted of sin, he was ready to yield all, only so that the God he feared would extend to him His mercy.

If the publican had chosen to act in accord with the prevailing sentiment of the time, instead of going quietly and alone to the temple to pour out his soul to God alone, he would have hired a crier to go before him and announce that he was about to do some work of charity; or he would have taken his station on the corner of some prominent street and addressed the Deity in his finest rounded phrase, while the multitude stood by gazing and wondering at the wonderful transformation. He would have had his head shaven, and would have put on the mournful look of a faster, and would have walked the streets in such manner as to attract attention to the fact that he was abstaining from food as an act of devotion. Nor, indeed, can we doubt that had

he followed these courses of conduct he would have been the gainer in his standing among his fellow citizens, and that his respectability would have been increased. But Christ plainly teaches that all these outward acts, to be seen of men, do not weigh one jot in the account, in aid of the salvation of the soul. "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut to thy door, pray to thy Father which seeth in secret."

There can be no doubt that it is the most difficult thing in the whole range of human experience, for a man to do, to acknowledge that he is utterly powerless in the matter of aiding in the work of saving his soul. It is so contrary to the feeling of independent manhood, to be obliged to admit that anything that we may do is useless in this regard, that this fact in the Divine economy becomes a stumbling block over which very many cast themselves headlong into the very jaws of perdition.

The modern churchman is not so very dissimilar to the Pharisee of old. We are exhorted to good deeds, to the support of the church, to activity in so-called "church work,"

to labor in the various departments of church service, with a seeming consent all the time to the idea that in the doing all these things there is something of excellence. You are exhorted to pay your tithes to the church, and to give freely of your gains, with the ever ready assurance that "the Lord loves the cheerful giver," and many similar passages; but how rarely, save when an effort is being made to bring on the winter-time revival, are you urged to cry mightily to God, to "be merciful to me a sinner." This, and this alone, should be the constant cry to heaven, from every heart which longs for the love and assistance of our Heavenly Father. It is not enough that we have once, when in our misery we found that we were not in accord with the Divine will, cried to God for His aid and received in response to our urgent cry the knowledge that we were justified by faith in the Redeemer. We can no more save ourselves, after God in his abounding goodness has seen fit to grant us pardon for our past sins, than we could before. This prayer of the publican must be our heartfelt petition so long as we hope to be made par-

takers of the Divine love and blessing. We may toil in every department of so-called christian devotion, charity, free offerings to the church, attendance at the services of the church, activity in the Sunday-school, visiting the sick, attending the wants of the needy; but unless amid it all, we constantly and earnestly cry to God, "be merciful to me a sinner," with a full understanding and appreciation in the inmost recesses of our hearts, of our own weakness and worthlessness and entire inability to do anything to in any way aid in bringing ourselves into union with the Redeemer and the gospel of the cross, we shall fail at that most vital point, the abnegation of self, and reliance alone on the mercy of God through the blessed atonement of His Son.

The admission to one's self, and by acts of devotion, to one's friends that you give up the contest, and are willing to be saved by the sacrificial atonement of the Redeemer, is no doubt a difficult thing to do at the first; but when once accomplished it becomes easy, and when once accustomed to the yielding, it is

indeed a source of pleasure. Like the child who dislikes the aid of its father's hand in its first attempts to walk, but who finds after a few falls and bumps, that it is much the safer way, so the human heart clings to the feeling that it ought to be able to stem the tide of sin and overcome its own evil tendencies, as well as those that surround it, without the Divine aid. Vast numbers have tried the dangerous experiment to their cost, and not one has succeeded. It is contrary to the plan of God that they should succeed. God himself has undertaken a plan of redemption for fallen man, and he refuses our aid in the matter. When we are ready to allow him the honor of bringing about the grand consummation of placing us in harmony with the good and the true, when we are ready to appeal to Him for aid, and acknowledge with contrite heart that we are unequal to the task, then, and only then can we hope that He will lend us his ear, and come to our relief.

What is your prayer? Is it that of the Pharisee, with its self-conscious tone and spirit, indicating that you are satisfied with your con-

dition, and thankful that you are not like other men? Or do you, from the fullness of your heart cry mightily to God, daily and hourly, "God be merciful to me a sinner?" But rather let us inquire whether, after you have spent moments of attempted communion with your Heavenly Father, you feel the influence of His justifying love in your heart, filling you with the peace which passeth understanding?

The publican was justified rather than the Pharisee because he approached the Father of Spirits in an humble, earnest, contrite mood, with a faith that "God is, and is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him." He made his approach with no thought of show. Indeed, we may well believe that had he understood the truth as taught by the Savior, he would have gone to the seclusion of his closet, and there poured out his heart to his Heavenly Father, instead of to the publicity of the temple. But it was his spirit that enabled him to gain an answer to his prayer. He invoked Divine aid, he supplicated for mercy, he confessed his sins. But behind it all he *felt* what he said; his purpose of heart was noted on high, and

in response to his prayer, every word of which he felt in his inmost being, he was vouchsafed an evidence of the favor of God, and went down to his house freed from his load of guilt, and glad in the Lord.

It ill becomes us when we enter the presence of the Most High, that we bear upon our lips well rounded periods and smooth phrase, for He who "knoweth that we are dust," cannot be pleased with our puny efforts, how fine soever we may think them. But when we approach the mercy seat, it is very fitting that we feel our need of the mercy of God through the adorable Redeemer, and feeling thus, come with those words only which express the longings of our inmost hearts. The well rounded oratory of the modern prayer, which by its tone assumes that in this lower world are very many things of which the Creator of heaven and earth is not cognizant, and hence that it is necessary to inform him thereof, is not in keeping with the spirit of Christianity as taught by the Savior of men, nor is it of that respectful character which an acknowledgment of the vast distance between man and his

Maker, would seem to demand. In our approaches to the Father of Lights, "in whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning," our words should be few, and only those which give expression to our heartfelt needs, our cravings after God and his love, our sinful condition and lost estate, and our desires to "flee the wrath to come and lay hold on eternal life." If in this spirit we come to God, if we lay our burden at his feet, if we acknowledge to Him that we are undone and of ourselves are not competent to aid in the work of our redemption and salvation, if we confess "our manifold sins and wickedness, which we from time to time have committed against His divine majesty, provoking thereby, most justly, His wrath and indignation against us," and claim the merit of the atonement of His only Son, Jesus Christ our Savior, we may hope, and even confidently expect that He will bow down His ear and hear our cry, and hearing, He will forgive, and signify to us in no doubtful manner, that He has accepted us through the merits of His Son, and has adopted us into His family as sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.

But if you will persist in the endeavor to attempt the salvation of your soul on your own account, if you still desire to make the trial of your ability to merit heaven and its eternal joys by means of right living and a close attention to all that seems laid down in the moral law, if you still prefer to live a Pharisee, and be able to thank God that you are not as other men, and yet all the time remain ignorant of the true state of your own heart, with no love for the Redeemer who has given himself a ransom for you, with little love for the human race, save by the ordinary ties of friendship, harboring all the time a feeling of your own self-sufficiency and ability to work out the great problem of the soul's salvation without any aid from the fountain of salvation, I beg of you, without delay, to count the cost. What are the chances of your success? Has anyone ever succeeded in this attempt? Are you of stronger moral and spiritual fiber than any who have preceded you? Are you well aware of the environment you are choosing for yourself? Do you fully appreciate the qualities of your own being, and are you

acquainted with the deceitfulness of your own heart? Are you prepared to cope with this, your greatest enemy, in the struggle for eternal life? Do you, in short, hope to make yourself good by your own unaided efforts, bidding defiance to God, and ignoring His claim to take your salvation upon Himself? If this is your hope or plan, I can give you no encouragement, and can only hope that before it is too late you will be led to see yourself as you are seen by the eyes of the Infinite, and that you will, abandoning all your self-conceit in this matter, be able to cry mightily, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

And now finally, permit me to urge you all, by the grace of God given to each one of you, that you cast behind you, as a prompting of the evil within you, any thought of saving yourselves, either by correct living or a careful attention to good works, and giving yourselves up to the Lord to be saved by His abounding goodness, through the merits of the ever adorable Redeemer, resigning all self in the matter while crying with fervent heart, "God be merciful to me a sinner," you will approach unto Him

who is both ready and willing to save all who come unto Him, and receive from His bountiful hand the witness in your own hearts of the Divine love which shall enable you to know that you have passed from death unto life, and that while relying on God alone as your stronghold, you are more than conqueror, through Him who hath loved you, and given himself for you, to whom be glory, world without end.

"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

"Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

CHRISTIAN PRAYER.

Christian Prayer:

Conditions,

Praecedens et intra.

A BIBLE STUDY.

BY

SAMUEL F. COOK.

LANSING, MICH.,
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PRESS OF THOMPSON & VANBUREN,

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Christian Prayer: Conditions praecedens et intra.

"And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore, pray ye:

Our Father which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come.
Thy will be done in earth, as in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.—MATTHEW 6, 5-13.

"Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God: for God is in heaven and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few."—ECCLESIASTES, 5, 2.

The poet Montgomery has, with a keen insight into the true and essential spirituality of Christian prayer, given us in one of his hymns, a definitive description of prayer which seems to be in exact accord with the instructions of Jesus Christ on this subject. The hymn is as follows:

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered or unexpressed;
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near.

Prayer is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try;
Prayer the sublimest strains that reach
The Majesty on high.

Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice,
Returning from his ways;
While angels in their songs rejoice
And cry "Behold he prays."

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air,
His watchword at the gates of death:
He enters heaven with prayer.

Prayer is as old as the human race. It has ever been an acknowledgment of weakness and need of help from some higher power. Among the most degraded of the barbarous races prayer is resorted to, even though the object to which the prayer is addressed is a mere fetich of the superstition, which for the time holds the place of a deity. The human soul feels the need of help. It is oppressed by the forces of nature. As compared with his surroundings, a man is a mere pigmy. He stands appalled before the mysterious displays of natural phenomena which confront him at every turn, and almost involuntarily calls upon the being or object which he believes able to succor and protect him, for the succor and protection which his fears demand.

The form and manner of the prayer is as varied as the individual conceptions of the object to which or to whom it is addressed. The lower types of the barbarous African tribes debase themselves to the worship of the most loathsome of the reptilian forms of life, and in attitude the most abject, implore the aid and protection which they believe that snakes

and lizards have within their power to grant. The idolatrous tribes of Africa and Asia people some image of their handicraft with spirit power, both for good and evil, and as though the idol were a living entity, offer to it their ardent devotions and their urgent appeals for help. Even in those countries where the prevailing belief is in the one God, the Creator of the universe and all things visible and invisible, the Father and giver of life, the form, matter and manner of the prayer addressed to the Most High, are still subject to the individual conceptions of the suppliant. Nor indeed, is this strange, since it is highly probable that even our highest conceptions fall very far short of a complete comprehension of the character and attributes of the God we worship.

At the time of the advent, the Jews were the only peoples who could be said to be worshipers of the one true God. Aside from these the multitudes of the nations were the servants of some one or another of the types of idolatry. But even among the Jews, who had the law and the prophets, with a long and eventful history, such as that it would seem that they ought

to have been on some terms of acquaintance with the character and attributes of the Jehovah they claimed to serve, there seems to have been an almost complete misconception of everything contained in their sacred writings, save only those things which seemed to form a basis for the performance of good works. The Jewish idea of their God seems to have been very similar to that entertained by the heathen for the idols they worshiped, and whose favor must be gained or wrath appeased by the doing of something in which there was merit, or by the making of costly gifts at his shrine. Under the conditions there existing, it is not strange that prayer as an act of worship and an element of religious life, had become, to a large proportion of those who felt a necessity for some sort of cognizance on the part of the Deity, scarce more than a form of words, and those very usually framed for the ears of men rather than to be heard by the great and dread Jehovah who had thundered his law from the mount Sinai.

The Christ,—God made manifest in the flesh, —taught to his followers a more perfect gospel.

He announced that God is a spirit, and that those who worship Him must do so in spirit and in truth. He declared that God seeth and knoweth the thoughts and intents of the heart. He taught that the communings of man with his Maker were to be as that of heart with heart, of spirit with spirit.

While there were not a few among the Jews who knew the secrets of the Most High, and were on terms of daily and pleasant communion with the Jehovah by means of heart and spirit intercourse, to the masses of those who essayed to comply with the requirements of the law, the teachings of the prophets and the sayings of the ancients, the methods and forms of prayer were very similar to those of the idolatrous peoples about them. Their prayers were an outward show of piety, and were on a par with their offerings of slain beasts, and the contribution of one-tenth of all their income for the support of the temple service. Having been taught that to pray was one of the recognized religious duties, they prayed. They prayed long, loud and vociferously. Anxious for the approval of their

fellows, and desirous of being regarded as belonging among the number of the pious, they did not hesitate to so place themselves when they prayed, as that their friends and acquaintances should be cognizant of the fact; nor did they fail to so frame their address to the God they were supposed to worship, as that those who paused to listen should be impressed both with the rhetoric of the finely wrought periods and the skill in oratorical delivery. So entirely correct was this manner of worship supposed to be that those who were not able to exercise themselves in public in such a way as to secure the plaudits of the gaping crowd, looked on with envy at the performances of those whose abilities shone brightly in the arena of prayer, as much discomfitted by their own lack as they would have been by a defeat in a forensic encounter. The fashionable prayer of the times, the prayer in demand by those who claimed the right to be edified as well as pleased by the religious exercises of others, was the one which exhibited the smoothest flow of well rounded periods,

and was delivered in the most approved style, of the time, of religious oratory.

In sharp, cutting condemnation of the then current methods and conceptions, the Christ said, "When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men." These words of our Lord can be understood as meaning nothing less than that prayers made under the circumstances of ostentatious publicity are hypocritical; they are made for the ears and edification of the listeners, rather than for the consideration of Him who sitteth on the heavens. Immediately following his denunciation of ostentatious prayer, Christ gave utterance to a positive command as to the proper surroundings to be sought in order to an acceptable approach to God. He said, "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which seeth in secret."

In this denunciation and command, we have proof, if indeed proof were needed, that Christ "needed not that any one should bear witness

concerning man; for he himself knew what was in man." The Christ was well aware of the fact that humanity is very largely influenced and not infrequently controlled by its environment. He knew that if the worshiper was in the presence of men, his prayer would be to men rather than to God. He knew that in order to a communion between man and God, the man must be divested of everything in the way of surroundings which could in any way divert his thought or distract his attention from his act of worship. He knew that if a man desired to gain the attention of God to the extent that he would withdraw himself to the secret places of his inner chamber, there to pour out the desires of his heart unheard and unguessed by any save by God alone, that the man was in earnest, and in fitting frame of mind and spirit for recognition from the Father of Lights, in whom is no darkness at all. More than this, he knew that very few, if indeed any, of His frail creatures would be able to so far divest themselves of the influences of their surroundings, as that in the presence of any other than the limited circle of

one's intimates, they would be able to pray to God alone, with no thought of their human listeners, and how the prayer was being regarded by them. He knew that in the exercise of public prayer there would lack that close approach in spirit which is necessary to a saving faith in the gifts and promises of God. While indeed it may be possible for one to pray in the synagogue or on the corner of the street, in utter oblivion to all the surroundings, the instances are very rare, and I suspect that the individuals who would be able to accomplish such a result, are not often to be met.

Is your prayer at the family altar at all similar to your prayer in the seclusion of your own room, when you have carefully closed the door? Are your needs very different on the two occasions? Is your prayer at the family altar when some one outside your own family circle is present, quite similar to that when only the family is present? What causes the difference? Are there any more or greater causes for thankfulness? Are your needs so very different? Did not your family note an increase of force in your voice, and a slight

hesitation in the seeking for just the word needed to fill out a well framed sentence, when the visitor was present? Did you use the same badly worn form when you asked a blessing on the meal, or did you interpolate an unused phrase or two, to make it smoother to the ears of the stranger? Do you pray for anything, when you lead in prayer at the prayer meeting, that you do not ask for when you are alone with God? Why? How does it happen that your breadth of view is so much increased, when you are surrounded by your christian intimates, that your requests flow forward thick and fast? How is it that you find it necessary to tell the Lord so many things? And why do you tell Him so many things, which you tell him that he knows? And why do you fill in the interstices of your public prayers with choice quotations from scripture? Is it anything different from what is known in vulgar parlance as "addressing the galleries?" Was the prayer addressed to God, but framed to fit the ears of men? Are you regarded as being "gifted in prayer?" If so, do you have a consciousness of communion

with the Father, during your public exercises? Or is the reward, which is certainly yours, merely a feeling of satisfaction that you have given expression to thoughts and requests which have met with the approval of the listeners, and that the form of address was fitting the place and the occasion? "When thou prayest, enter into thy secret chamber, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which seeth in secret."

The next admonition given by our Lord, as to the form of our prayers, is of much more importance than seems to be usually accorded to it. He said, "When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking." The use of the self same words over and over, are not necessary to a vain repetition. The thought may be expressed in a great variety of ways, but as long as the central thought of the petition remains the same, a single statement of the desire is all that is allowable under the teaching of our Lord. Christ said that our Father knows what things we have need of before we ask Him. Instead of making our

requests for what we desire from God's bountiful hand, how frequently we hear the petitioner enter into an elaborate discussion not only of the need, but of all the reasons why the need exists. All too often we enter into an argument, in the endeavor to show that our request should be granted. We inform the Lord of the multitude of promises He has made in this regard, quoting more or less glibly from His written word in substantiation of our plea, the tone and manner of which are very similar to that of a child who is chafing under parental restraint, and intent on having its own way, even to the extent of importunate nagging. The importunity of the woman who with great frequency appealed to the unjust judge to avenge her of her adversary, is not to be confounded with the practice of a useless waste of words, in our approaches to God. She gained her cause by the frequency of her appeal, and not by her many words. At short intervals she approached the judge and cried, "Avenge me of my adversary." She entered into no argument why this should be done. She simply showed her earnestness

by the frequency with which she went before the court and made her request. She did not quote the law in her behalf; she did not plead her own needs or sufferings; but we may reasonably infer that each day, at about the same hour, she went before the judge and cried, "Avenge me of mine adversary." Christ says that it was her continued coming that won her cause for her. The judge was not wearied by her many words, but by her continued coming. "When ye pray use not vain repetitions."

Following the remarks of our Savior which we have so far discussed, the query naturally arises, "How shall we pray, and pray aright?" In this case, our Lord gave to his disciples the principles upon which a proper approach may be made to the throne of grace, and the injunction to use but few words in the expression of our desires, before giving them a sample of such a prayer as would comply with the conditions of heartfelt supplication. Following that, He said to them, "After this *manner* therefore, pray ye." Not indeed, that we are to use these particular words, nor any other set

phraseology, in our approaches to the Father of mercies, but after the *manner* of this form, simple, concise, earnest.

For the purpose of a readier examination, let us by a simple analysis, divide it into its parts. First, we have the simple address; "Our Father which art in heaven;" Second, an ascription of praise, "Hallowed be thy name;" Third, a prayer for general spiritual blessings, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;" Fourth, a prayer for personal temporal blessings, "Give us this day our daily bread;" Fifth, a prayer for personal spiritual blessings, "And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil."

Than this model, can anything be more concise or complete? How expressive every sentence—may we not say, every word. And yet, what more remains to be said? Are we not justified in claiming that as a model of comprehensiveness it knows no equal? The form of address is indeed inimitable, and the prayer as a complete whole, would perhaps

seem adapted perfectly to our wants—to express all our desires and give utterance to our joys. With no circumlocutory review of the condition of fallen man, it prays for the spread of the gospel—"thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." In simplest earnest phrase it asks as a child of a parent, the supply for our daily physical needs —"give us this day our daily bread." Can any confession of sin be more appropriate than this one which asks forgiveness, simply? Although the words are few, they comprehend the fullest, most ample thought concerning all our interests for time and eternity.

And yet with all its wonderful characteristics, for the use of a christian, this prayer is sadly lacking. It is an attempt to approach unto God without any plea. It contains no mention of any intercessor, by means of whom we may approach into the Divine presence, and claim acceptance. The use of this prayer ignores the atonement. Christ declared that "no man cometh to the Father but by *Me*." The professed followers of Christ have no right to essay any approach to the mercy seat, unless

they bear up first and foremost in their thought, their heart and their petition, the name and merits of the one great mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. It should not be forgotten that the gloria which appears at the end of this model for a prayer, in Matthew vi, 13, is an interpolation of the copyists, and is not by any means to be taken as the words of Christ.

Jesus seems to have left this sample of a prayer, purposely incomplete. He was not yet ascended to the bosom of the Father, nor had he assumed the mediatorial functions. It was not appropriate for him at that time to frame a form of prayer for his followers which should be so complete as that it would ever after have been the only prayer which his children could use, being led to suppose that none other would be allowed. On the contrary, the forms of petition which He gave to his disciples, were simply in illustration of the principles which he had just been enunciating, in reply to the request of the disciples that they be taught to pray.

In view of all the facts, and the pointed

words of Christ, it is not a little strange that the Christian world, with one consent, persists in the use of the words of this model form, ignoring the plain teaching in regard thereto; and still, although all well informed people know that the gloria is no part of the prayer, and that since it makes no mention of the merit of Christ as the plea for the granting of the several petitions, it ill becomes those whose only hope is centered in the cross, in all the churches, the people with one accord, pray that they may be heard, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen." Closing the prayer in this way, makes it just fitting for the Jew, who denies the Messiahship of Christ, or for the Unitarian, who denies the incarnation, the atonement and the Trinity.

It sometimes seems that people read only such passages of the bible as agree with their preconceived notions as to what or how it ought to teach or read. We gather in our churches to worship God, and claim to attempt our worship, on the ground that Jesus Christ has opened a way of approach to the mercy seat for us, and that in his name we may come with

boldness, and implore the mercies of our Heavenly Father. We bow in prayer. The minister addresses the throne of the divine mercy. He does not forget to ask for everything which his thoughts can compass, as to the needs of those who with him are engaged in the act of worship. Nor indeed does he fail to mention the concerns of this lower world, and express for us our anxiety that the ruler of the universe will not forget any of our latent hobbies. Finally, having exhausted the whole round of subjects and objects for which petition was possible, he closes by asking that our feeble prayers be answered "in the name of Him who has taught us to say."

And then the whole audience join in repeating the words of the model form, and add thereto the appended gloria. Can you conceive of a more brazen effrontery? You pay not the slightest heed to the injunctions of Christ, that you shall not use vain repetitions, by going over *in extenso* the whole range of concepts for which your words are sufficient to frame a petition, putting each one in as many different forms of words as your para-

graphs and facility of expression will allow, and then close by telling the Most High, He who knows what we need before we ask Him, He who is the very embodiment of truth, a bald untruth. You tell him that you ask the answer of your multiplied petitions, in the name of Him who has taught us to say, words which He did not teach us to say. He did not tell his disciples to use the words He uttered in order to illustrate the principles of earnest, simple prayer. He told them to pray after that manner; they were to use no superfluous words in their petitions. But while it is plainly taught that no man cometh to the Father but by the Son, you ignore that fact, and claim the answer of your prayer, why? "For Thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen." But Christ did not teach us to use these words. And yet you assume to tell the Lord who made and fashioned you, that Christ taught us to use that Jewish-Unitarian plea, as the reason why our requests should have cognizance from Him who inhabitest eternity. It is high time to away with such hypocrisy and falsehood from our prayers;

and if we are not able to frame a simple, concise, pointed, earnest petition as we essay to draw near to the mercy seat, use the form of words which Christ used in his illustration, but stop where He stopped.

I am strongly impressed with the probability that the prayers we make in the seclusion of our closets, are much more nearly in accord with the teachings of Christ, and the spirit of the gospel, than those we make in public. Our human nature has such a hold on us that we are unable to divest ourselves of the feeling that we are being listened to by both acquaintances and strangers, and we with semi-unconsciousness frame our petitions, and mould our thoughts so as to impress our hearers as pleasantly as possible. To this end it becomes necessary for us to make a somewhat symmetrical address to the throne of grace. We offer our thanks. We frame our petition, and then argue the case in our behalf. We remind the Lord of the many promises He has made to those who come to Him. We plainly show our fear that He is forgetful of His word and promises to usward, and in order that we may

be sure of the blessings we ask, we must remind Him, not only that we are in need, but that He has pledged His word that He will supply all our need. While it may be sometimes necessary for a child to remind the parent that something has been promised, and that the present is a fitting occasion for the fulfillment of that promise, it occurs to me that our conceptions of God and His character, His wisdom and His goodness, must be either very gross or very dim, or we could not thus address Him. Christ has told us that the Father is more willing to give good gifts to those who ask Him, than is a parent to give to his children. Evidently, we do not believe Christ's word in this regard. If we did, we would make our requests in simplest, earnest phrase, and feel certain that our prayers would be promptly answered, unless knowing more of us than we do of ourselves, He sees that it is not for our own good to have our petition granted.

"God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." Prayer, or worship, is a heart exercise. Vocalization is

by no means a necessity to communion with the Father of Spirits. Repetitions of the words or thoughts, or special pleadings in urgent manner, are perhaps well illustrated in the case of the test proposed by the prophet Elijah, to determine which was the true God, Baal or Jehovah. The mass of the people having been gathered together, it was arranged that the representatives of the claims of deity should lay on an altar an offering of a slain beast, and then call on their god to accept the sacrifice, and prove his power by burning up the offering, without assistance from man. The prophets of Baal first built their altar, and laid thereon the wood and then placed the carcass of the slaughtered beast thereon. This they did in the forepart of the day, and then began their prayers to their god to kindle the fire under the offering and thus prove his power, and right to be known as a god. These prophets of Baal were in great number. In his address of challenge, Elijah said, "I only, remain a prophet of the Lord; but Baal's prophets four hundred and fifty men." Idolatry was fashionable; the worship of the

Jehovah was at a discount. The record states that those prophets "called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon. But there was no voice nor any that answered." "And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them;" this word "mocked" meaning in this place that he held them up to derision. He said to them, "Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is on a journey; peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked." In these cutting words, the old prophet was simply making use of the then well known perversity of the idols or gods of the nations, as was wont to be explained by their priests when they failed to get such replies to their solicitations as they desired. But how many of us, in our attempts at public devotion, call upon God as if we thought that he was deaf or sleeping, or peradventure was so engaged with other concerns that we must needs put into our prayers an excess of lung power, and continue to entreat His notice, by means not so very dissimilar to those resorted to by the prophets of Baal, who, goaded by the stinging mockery of Elijah, increased their physical

exertions, leaping upon the altar, and cutting themselves with knives, until the blood gushed out upon them. Can we not bring ourselves to conceive of our God as a being whose ear is ever open to our call, that he is not far from any one of us, that by his spirit he is watching all our efforts to come to Him, that he never slumbers or sleeps, and that he only requires of us an implicit confidence in the way of escape which he has provided for fallen man, even a trust in the atonement made for us by the ever adorable Redeemer?

I once, as a sight-seer, visited the cathedral of the Notre Dame, at Montreal. Having purposely chosen an hour when no services were likely to be in progress, I found the great edifice empty of worshipers, save one man only, who there alone was wrestling for the divine favor. In a corner of that vast audience room, farthest removed from the splendors of the great altar, a number of the pews had been removed, so as to give a clear floor space of about sixteen feet square. Against the wall, at one side of this open space, a cross had been erected, with a victim

thereon, in such manner as to be intensely realistic. The cross was made of pine lumber, two by six inches in size, and twelve feet high. On this cross was fastened, with spikes driven through the hands and feet, the life sized image of a man, which had been carved from a pine log. As a work of art—wood sculpture—in imitation of the conceptions of the most noted painters, of the crucifixion of Jesus, it was well nigh a wonder. The tension of the muscles plainly depicted the intense strain of suffering to which they were being subjected, and the brow and face bore vivid traces of the intense agony of the victim. On three sides of the open floor space were rough board seats made by placing blocks of wood on the floor, and on these, undressed planks. In the open space thus formed, was a man most intensely engaged in devotion. He was evidently a poor man, as he had no coat, and his clothes were of the coarsest kind. Judging from his physiognomy, he was one of the class known as French *habitans*, and was without any education beyond the mere trifle that he had gained from the instructions of the church. Partly

sitting and partly kneeling on the floor, with his face turned toward the crucified effigy, his lips were in constant and rapid motion, in the evident utterance of words which were inaudible to our ears. Now he stretched his arms out toward the cross in the most appealing manner; now he threw himself prone upon the floor, and writhed in an agony. His head, arms and shoulders were in constant motion, and seemed to indicate an intense mental struggle. His face was, to me, a most wonderful picture of conflicting passions—remorse, hope, despair. He seemed to be utterly oblivious to our presence, and alone, with none to cheer, instruct or assist him in any way, in his struggle to become reconciled with God, he wrestled with his fears, his hopes and his misery. His face would have been called, under ordinary circumstances, stolid and expressionless; but under the strain of his mental and moral emotions, it was most strangely contorted, and showed by turns, in most unmistakable manner, the utmost depths of grief, remorse and despair. I think it entirely safe to assume that he had come to feel that

he was in dire need of help from God, and there, before the effigy of the crucified Savior, he plead for pardon for his sin in such form as he had been taught by the church. Poor man! With all his apparent earnestness, what hope was there that he would secure the boon he sought—the pardon of an offended God? He was as really an idolater as any of those who suffered under the maledictions of the Most High, and for their grossness were swept from the earth by the hands of the conquering Israelites. More than this, he was engaged in vain repetition of mere forms of words which had been prescribed by the church for those who were in his sad state. All this was in accord with the theory of the church, as propounded to me at one time by one of her prelates, who explained that since it was not possible for the common people to comprehend God as a spirit, and worship as a purely spiritual exercise, it was necessary that the church should place before them something in the way of effigies or pictures, which should serve as aids to their imagination, and thus assist them in their devotions. "The time of

this ignorance God winked at, but now commands all men to repent."

To pray without ceasing, does not signify that when one has begun a prayer, there shall be no limit, no end to the words that flow forth in the form of a petition. In his letter to the Phillipians, Paul instructs them in this wise: "In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." Earnestly, simply, with faith in His abounding goodness, we are to tell the Lord of those things which are in our minds and hearts, and do this without trace of anxiety on our part, as to the result. But especially is it not fitting that we should address the audience over the Lord's shoulder. How not infrequently we hear short sermons, and sometimes not so very short, delivered in the form of prayers. The supposed suppliant does not seem to have the Lord in mind at all, unless the God of his conception is an ignoramus, since he is in need of so much information, but begins by telling Him at the opening of each sentence, either "We know," or "Thou knowest." As offen-

sive to the spirit of true prayer as this is, it is hardly equal to the prayer, (so called) delivered many years ago in Boston by one of the most famous of the New England rhetoricians, and which called forth the statement made by a reporter in one of the New York papers, that "He gave utterance to the most eloquent prayer ever delivered to a Boston audience."

The lessons to be learned from a study of the Lord's prayer and its immediate context, are neither few nor simple. Since it is by prayer, and by prayer alone that man may commune with his Maker it is of the highest importance that those who would be on terms of acquaintance with their Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, Friend and omnipotent Savior, should pay due heed to the instructions which He has left us as to a fitting manner in which we may approach the mercy seat. Failing to frame our thoughts, desires and expressions in accord with the principles underlying Christ's teaching in this regard, we should not be surprised if we are treated as was the man mentioned by our Lord, who had been bidden to a wedding, and although the host furnished the

proper apparel for his guests, did not put on the garment which would make him presentable on such an occassion. And when the host came in and saw him, all unarrayed in costume befitting the festivities, he said to him "Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment." And he was speechless. The host evidently regarding the man as perpetrating an intentional insult, directed his servants to "Bind him hand and foot and cast him out into outer darkness." We should not for a moment presume that because God has asked us to come to Him in prayer, and has promised to hear and answer our prayers, that we may lightly ignore the rules He has laid down for our coming. First, we are to realize that God is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. We must also realize the primary fact that God is a spirit, and that those who would come to Him, must do so in spirit. We must realize that true worship is of the heart. But true heart exercises are neither boisterous or wordy. It is entirely possible that a true and earnest prayer may well up from the heart to God, and be all un-

spoken. But such prayers will not gain the encomiums of those whom assume to criticise the religious exercises of others, nor gain the plaudit that So-and-so is gifted in prayer. "Enter into thy secret chamber, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which seeth in secret." All alone, in the semi-light of a closed room, from which everything is shut out save the worshiper and his Lord, draw near to Him who knoweth the thoughts and intents of the heart. There you may commune as friend with friend. There you may come to know, with all saints, what is the length and breadth, and height and depth and may comprehend the love of Christ our Savior which passeth knowledge.

TITHES: HISTORY AND USAGE.

Tithes: History and Usage.

A BIBLE STUDY.

BY

SAMUEL F. COOK.

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Tithes: History and Usage.

FOR THERE IS VERILY A DISANNULLING OF THE COMMANDMENT GOING BEFORE FOR THE WEAKNESS AND UNPROFITABLENESS THEREOF,

FOR THE LAW MADE NOTHING PERFECT, BUT THE BRINGING IN OF A BETTER HOPE DID, BY THE WHICH WE DRAW NIGH UNTO GOD.

Hebrews, VII, 18 and 19.

The attempt which is being put forth to inoculate American protestantism with the doctrine and practice of "tithing", seems, unfortunately, to demand some little attention. False doctrines earnestly promulgated by good men are no doubt more dangerous to the general good than any other, since the masses of those who are seeking after the truth, are influenced fully as much by the character of the man who for the time being is their religious teacher, as by a careful analysis of the foundation upon which the doctrine really rests. The modern doc-

trine of tithing as put forth in this country has grown, and has at present some little standing, almost entirely on the acknowledged religious characters of those who teach it, rather than on anything that can be found in the bible in its support. If it were not for the fact that some really good men believe and teach it, this doctrine would not be worthy so much as a passing notice.

In order to a fair understanding of the subject, a careful analysis of the history of tithing, as it may be found by combining the facts to be obtained from both sacred and profane records, will be necessary.

The most ancient record touching on this point is found in the book of Genesis, and contains the account of the giving of tithes by Abraham to the priest Melchizedek, who came forth to bless him on his return from the discomfiture of the allied kings. This record, which is relied on as the starting point in the genealogy of tithing, has some points so dissimilar, as to raise the query as to whether the tithing there mentioned had any relation to what we now know as tith-

ing. Melchizedek did not wait for Abraham to come to him for priestly service, but himself went forth from his city taking with him bread and wine. As we know from profane history, it was the custom among the patriarchs to cement friendship with their neighbors, and especially with those whom they deemed to be powerful, by ceremonials and religious rites, so the king of Salem, having heard of the prowess of the Hebrew, thought to win his favor and esteem; and in connection with his present of bread and wine, volunteered a blessing. The patriarchs were priests by virtue of rank, and had charge of all the religious rites of their families. But Melchizedek was a worshipper, and hence a a priest of the Most High God. Whether the information furnished us in the epistle to the Hebrews was possessed by Abraham, we have no means of knowing; but it is safe to assert that his conduct on that occasion was not different from what was demanded by the customs of the time. It is stated that Abraham gave to Melchizedek "tithes of all." If the account had stopped with this

statement, we could not well avoid understanding it as saying that he gave to the king of Salem one tenth of the spoil which he had taken from the slaughtered kings. But we are informed that Abraham had sworn that he would not take even the least thing of the spoil for himself, and that every thing that he had taken was returned to his neighbors whom he had avenged, save only that which the soldiers had eaten. Of what then did he give tithes? or of what did he give one tenth? The answer to this question remains in obscurity: but from what knowledge we have of the customs then prevalent, he paid no real one tenth of anything, but simply gave his neighbor, in return for his politeness and the blessing which he invoked upon him, a very handsome present. It is proper to note at this point that whatever the amount of the gift to Melchizedek, it was a gift to him and not in any sense to the God whose blessing he had invoked. It was a personal gift to the priest, not to the Deity whom the priest represented.

The first unmistakable case of tithing

which the records furnish, is found in the vow which Jacob made at Bethel, on the morning after his wonderful dream, and the promises which were conveyed to him by means thereof. This vow will be found in Genesis XXVIII, 20–22. It is as follows: If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God; and this stone which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth to thee.

In this vow we have all the elements of a business arrangement. *If* the Lord will gratify his desires for earthly good, he in return will adopt God as his family deity, and will in addition give to Him one tenth of,—not the annual increase,—but one tenth of the whole of his gettings. There is here no promise of an annual tithing, a contribution of one tenth of his gross income to be paid over at stated periods, but simply that at some time he will give to God, *if* his

demand for bread to eat and raiment to wear is complied with, one tenth of his possessions. But this business proposition which Jacob seems to have regarded as entirely proper, would hardly be becoming in the case of one who professes the religion of Jesus Christ. It was simply the equivalent for saying that unless he was fed and clothed and brought again to his father's house in peace, he would find some other deity with whom he could make satisfactory arrangements. In pursuance of the plans which He had formulated for the instruction, enlightenment, and final redemption of the race, God saw fit to accept the challenge which Jacob then gave, and carried out all the conditions on His part; but whether Jacob ever carried out his part of the contract we are left to wonder. It would seem that if God had regarded the giving of the one tenth as of any real importance, we should have been furnished with a record of the fulfillment of this vow, with a detail of the rites, ceremonies and liturgies attendant thereat. In the absence of any record in this regard,

from what little knowledge we have of the Hebrew character at that time, it seems more than probable that Jacob entirely forgot, at the period of his prosperity, all about the vow which he had made, and never found it convenient to make the proper division of his estate, giving one tenth to the God who had made of him a great people.

Whether there is or was any connection between the vow which Jacob made as to the one tenth of his property, and the requirement in the Mosaic law that one tenth of the annual increase should be given to the Levites, is, as far as the scriptures are concerned, merely problematical. There may have or there may not have been the slightest connection. At the time of the giving of the law at Sinai, all the world was given to idolatry, and the Hebrews themselves were so little removed therefrom that during the absence of Moses upon the mount, they demanded of Aaron that he make gods to go before them. They had been witnesses of the wonders which had been done in the land of Egypt on their account, they knew full

well that all had been done in the name of the unseen God of their fathers, "the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth," they had witnessed their own marvelous escape from the Egyptian hosts, walking through the Red sea dry shod, but so gross were they, at so short a remove were they from the lower forms of barbaric life, that after a few days of absence on the part of Moses, they were ready to demand of Aaron some semblance of a God whom they could see and appreciate, "since as for this Moses, we wot not what has become of him." It was absolutely necessary that they should undergo a long and severe mental and moral training in order that they might finally be brought to a condition such that they could conceive the true character of the Jehovah who had taken them in hand for the purpose not only of making of them a peculiar people for himself, but also that he might fulfill the promises made to Abraham and Isaac that he would not only make of them a great people, but in them should all the nations of the earth be blessed.

At the time of the exodus, the nations of the world had to a very large extent advanced so far in wealth and refinement as that the religions which they professed were carried on with great splendor and elaborate rites. Each god and goddess had at their several shrines, large coteries of priests and persons assisting them in the sacrificial rites; many of the shrines were gorgeous temples, decked with gold and precious stones, fine linen and purple; rare spices and perfumes were in constant use, and no one might approach the shrine as a worshipper or to enquire into futurity, unless he brought thither gifts of value as well as the necessary beasts for the sacrifices. It was clearly understood that in order to appease the wrath of the gods or to secure aid or comfort therefrom, it was necessary to pay to the full extent of the ability of the suppliant therefor. The gifts were made ostensibly to the gods, but it was well known that in fact they were for the use and benefit of the shrine, i. e. of the priests. At some of the more popular shrines, vast wealth was accumulated, and

the priests became at times, the very arbiters of nations, plunging them into wars, decreeing destruction or prosperity at their caprice. The system of worship devised for the Hebrews under the Mosaic code, had reference to all these things. In order that they might have the less occasion to turn away to the worship of idols, the tabernacle, and finally the temple with the service thereat, was somewhat more splendid and elaborate than that of any of the idol shrines. And yet, lacking only the idol, the counterpart of nearly all the ceremonials of sacrifice can be found in the worship of Jupiter and his numerous progeny of lesser gods and goddesses. In the tabernacle and temple, the ark and the mercy seat above it took the place of the statue of the god at the idol shrine. This, and this alone, marked the difference between the worship of the Jehovah, in its outward forms, and that of the other notable gods. Instead of an image of the deity, Jehovah himself overshadowed the mercy seat with a cloud, which there remained the visible semblance of His power

and majesty; not to be viewed, indeed by any other than the high priest, but the people had the promise in the books of the law that as long as they remained faithful to His service, His visible presence should there appear.

For the carrying on of the elaborate system of ceremonial worship provided in the Mosaic code, with the dignity and splendor necessary to duly impress a people so gross as were the Hebrews, not a few people were necessary, and hence a whole tribe was detailed for these duties. The tribe of Levi having been set apart for the servital work of the ceremonial law, they were cut off from any landed inheritance among their brethren, but were given a few cities to live in, with the pasturage adjoining on which to feed their flocks. They were cut off from the agricultural pursuits of their nation, and were to live on the taxes levied on the other eleven tribes. The law provided that every citizen should contribute in kind, one tenth of his increase, annually to the Levites. This levy included every class of product of

the soil as well as of their herds. If this contribution, which was in reality a national tax for the support of a national religion, lacking only the power of enforcement, had been due and payable but once a year, the Levites would have been without adequate support; but the provision for the bringing in of first fruits was intended to furnish a steady and continuous supply of everything needed for the comfort of a Hebrew family. Out of the tithes received by the Levites, they were to take one tenth for the maintenance of the priests. It should be noted however, that the payment of this tax was accompanied with a religious ceremonial, as not otherwise could it be expected that a people fresh from bondage would pay a tax. The tithe was consequently made a "heave offering." This consisted in lifting up, near the great altar, the article; but under the wording of the law, the tithes were not offered *to* the Lord, but were commanded to be offered *before* the Lord. He had decreed that they should *belong* to the Levites as their property.

This then, without going into all the detail, was the tithing of the Mosaic code.

The whole Mosaic law was a system of justification by works,—the doing of something in return for which the divine blessing was to accrue. The people were in no mental or moral condition to appreciate spirituality in life or worship,—to understand that "God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth," and hence they were allowed to purchase immunity from the ills of wrong doing, by an elaborate and expensive system of gifts and offerings. To the system as devised, something analagous to tithes was an absolute necessity. The law itself gives but a faint glimpse of the elaborate ceremonials of the tabernacle and temple service; but from the writings of the Hebrew doctors, and a study of I Chronicles, XXIII–XXVI, we may obtain the facts necessary to an appreciation not only of the necessities of the worship, but of the great number of people required for its due and proper observance. That the payment of the

tithes was a necessity to the system, is shown by the fact that whenever the people fell away from their religion to such an extent that they failed to make these contributions, the Levites were obliged to turn elsewhere for their livelihood, and the service of the sanctuary was but feebly conducted. In other words, without the tithes, the system could not be carried on. The warnings and denunciations of the prophets for the failure to make payment of the tithes was the natural result of the failure of the celebration of the religious rites which could not be kept up without them. Unless the Levites were fairly supplied with the tithes, they did not perform the temple service, but turned otherwhere for the means of living. So it came about, not infrequently, that the Levites in not inconsiderable numbers, were engaged in the service of idol worship. Familiar as they were with all the forms, when the food supplies ran short and they were backslidden in heart, they became liberals in their religious notions, and served wherever their living was assured.

Not only were the tithes a necessity to the system of worship, but they were for a special purpose in connection with that system, and could not be lawfully diverted therefrom. The service of the Levites being a necessity to the system, their proper maintenance became also a necessity.

The payment of the tenth for the support of the Levites, did not by any means comprehend the sum of the required contributions to the service of the Lord. These were for the support of the service of a national sanctuary; the others were for the various forms of worship and the gifts to the poor. To the wealthy farmers, all these contributions came easily enough when their crops and herds were thriving, but for the man of limited means and business ability, after the payment of one tenth of his increase, there was a short allowance for the needs of his personal religion. One of the very natural results followed the system; the really pious, those who believed in the Jehovah and his word, and honestly tried to comply with the requirements of this law of works, sooner or

later found themselves among the poor, and became the servants in the houses of their wealthy neighbors.

After the return from the Babylonish captivity, the covenant which was made under the direction of Nehemiah provided that the tithes should be paid directly to the Levites, but the tenth of the tenths, which belonged to the priests, should be carried up to the temple, unto the Lord. The declaration of the law that one tenth of the increase of each year was holy to the Lord and was to be taken to the sanctuary for the Levites, was necessary as one of the elements for securing the proper payment. Among all the religions of ancient times, whatever was holy to the deity it was an extreme of profanation for the individual to use or even handle any more than was necessary for its conveyance to the shrine. The declaration of the law that one tenth of the increase should be holy to the Lord, in the conception of the times and the customs of all religions, took that increase out of the usable things, even if it was not contributed according to

the requirement. He who made use of aught that belonged to the tenth became, in his own eyes, a profanator, and thus liable to the especial vengeance of the offended deity for one of the most heinous of offenses. While there can be no doubt that severe penalties were inflicted upon the Hebrews for their laxity in the performance of this requirement, the degree of compliance therewith marked the ebb and flow of the religious condition of the nation as well as of the indivi-ual. Just in proportion to the desire after God and His favor was the desire for the worship of God in His appointed sanctuary; and as was the desire for the sanctuary worship, so was the willingness to bring tithes to the temple in order to promote that worship. He who seeks after God with a loving heart, spares not of his substance, if by any means he may honor God and aid his fellow man.

The prophets exhorted the people to bring in their tithes in order that their crops might be increased; but theirs was a religion of works. In their conception, in order to gain

the favor of God, they must first do something to merit His blessing. Unless they appeared at the temple with an offering, it was useless for them to pray, even. The prophets, indeed, taught the truths of a spiritual religion with the aid of the grandest of poetry and the loftiest of eastern imagery; but that it fell far short of its purpose and was construed only in material forms, is plainly evidenced by numerous passages of the gospels. To the Hebrews, the Jehovah they claimed as their national deity was little different from the other gods in the manner in which His favor was to be sought. As is no doubt true in every age and clime, there were a few, even in the darkest periods of the Hebrew history, who knew and had daily communion with the "Father of lights in whom is no variableness or shadow of turning;" but as compared with the whole people these were so sadly in the minority as to be hardly appreciated by the mass.

The law of Moses having become worn out as far as its efficacy in the salvation of men was concerned, and the world of man-

kind having arrived at a condition such that it could, if so disposed, come nearer to God and his truth than had theretofore been possible, a new revelation was made in aid of fallen man, "God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh," and thus making it possible that the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus should make us free from the law of sin and death. This Christ declared that not one jot or tittle of the law should pass until all be fulfilled. The law to which he referred in that declaration, was certainly not the whole of the Mosaic code, with its endless round of ceremonials and offerings, nor even rules for the every day life of those who would seek thereby to gain the realms of the blessed; but rather the reference was made to the very essence of the law, which was contained in this, "Without shedding of blood there is no remission." The aim of God even from the beginning has been to make a way of escape possible for fallen men from the results of the fall and the miseries of their own sinful hearts; and while under the Mosaic code this was

possible of accomplishment, so enthralled had the people become by the idea that they were winning their salvation by the doing of good things and by refraining from the bad, that it became necessary to bring forward for sacrifice the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," the free gift of God himself in behalf of a ruined humanity. Having declared himself and his witnesses being assured, Christ paid the penalty of the accumulated sins of the world upon the cross. But ere his spirit departed the body, he declared, "It is finished." All the requirements of the law given amid the thunders of Sinai had been satisfied. And when he had declared "It is finished," "the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." This rending of the veil not only admitted to the most holy place other than the priest, but marked the entire closing of the regime under which the temple service with its sacrifices, rites and ceremonials had constituted the central point in the religious life of God's chosen people. With the rending of the veil all

the efficacy of the priestly office and the Levitical service was at an end. Both had served their purpose in the plan of God for the redemption of the world, but by the sacrifice upon the cross an end was made of offerings for sin, and hence neither priest or Levite had any farther place in the economy of worship or service. By the declaration of Christ, also, the law of salvation by works was most pointedly repealed.

With the death, resurrection and ascension of our Lord, the law for the payment of tithes was abrogated. As before remarked, the tithes were a payment for a special purpose, and might not be diverted to any other. They were specifically declared to be the property of the Levites, save the tenth which they should contribute for the priests, and the law made special provision against their use for any other purpose. The incoming of a new regime under which the penalty for sin having been paid once for all by the sacrifice upon the cross, there was no Levitical service remaining for which the payment should be made, nor, indeed,

any Levites who might claim the tithes. Even if it be claimed that the law was not abrogated—pointedly repealed, by the declaration "It is finished," yet the law of tithing is abrogated by the fact that there are no Levites to whom the tithes can be paid. It will not do to imagine other than the one laid down in the law, to be the recipient of this service. To twist a law from its true intent is no better than to break it. If the authority of the law be still invoked for the payment of the tithes, the law must be followed in its strict letter, and the tenth of the increase must go to the Levites. If, indeed, under the law, provision had been made that under certain exigencies the tithes might be used for other of the temple services than the benefit of the Levites, there might be some leeway for those who claim that one-tenth of the increase should be paid into the coffers of "the church," to be used as "the church" may see fit. But there is no such opportunity given.

If it be still claimed that since the law of

tithes has not been repealed in terms, it should be remembered that from very ancient times the rule of law has been that a subsequent law which contravenes a prior one, repeals such of the provisions of the prior law as are in conflict. This rule obtained under the practice of the Medes and Persians, since in fact it was the only way in which their laws could be changed; and the Justinian code clearly recognizes the principle. In modern legislative practice a repealing act is only of value as a warning that a statute has been replaced by something different; the rule being that the act bearing the latest date of approval, takes precedence over others on the same subject of a prior date.

The religion of faith in the atonement of Christ being of a later date, repeals the law of the religion by works, by superseding it.

That the apostolic college regarded the clause of the law relative to tithing as obsolete, is evident to the careful student of the account given in the fifteenth of Acts, of the discussion and determination of the

relation of the law to the gentiles. When, after a full consideration of the subject as to how far the gentile converts should be bound by the Mosaic law, they wrote to them, "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden then these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication, from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well," they absolved them from every part of the law; the only requirements being that they should guard against any traces of sympathy with the worship of false gods, and lead moral lives. From the teachings of Christ as they had heard them, they were well indoctrinated into the creed of love to God and man, and this being well understood, there was little for the apostles to add. In his speech in opposition to those who desired to compel the gentiles to be circumcised and *keep the law*, Peter inquired with something of his wonted vehemence, "Now, therefore, why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck

of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" The insistence that the law of tithing holds good while the law of circumcision and the offering of slain beasts in propitiation for sin is done away, is unworthy of any one who believes in the gospel of Christ, or has any familiarity with the principles of jurisprudence.

So ingrained in the minds of the Jews was the belief that even under the reign of a Messiah all of the detail of the Levitical code must be carried out, that during the early stages of the Christian religion many of the believers at Jerusalem continued to comply with all the forms of the law, even going so far as to offer sacrifices on the temple altars, by the aid of the priesthood. Even Paul, himself, had but just finished a seven days of purification and the offering of beasts, when he was arrested, and from which arrest he was not thereafter free. The epistle to the Hebrews is a masterly argument in combat of the prevailing conception among the Jews. The writer of that book declares, chapter VII, 12, "For

the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law." The change of the law which abolished the Aaronic priesthood, abolished the offerings of slain beasts. The abolishment of the offerings for the various purposes of prayer and thanksgiving, abolished the Levitical temple service, and hence the tithes for the benefit of the Levites were also abolished.

Outside of Jerusalem, there seems to be no trace of any practice bordering on tithing, during the first four centuries of the Christian era, and when the traces do begin to appear, they are with the earmarks of the emboldened march of tyrannical ecclesiasticism. With the desire for power on the part of the clergy, came the demand for the means to build costly temples, the very existence of which necessitated, in the large cities, an increase of the assistant clergy, and the means to enable them to live in a manner comporting with their dignity, and finally the demand of the clergy that all contributions of the laity for every purpose should be placed in their hands, as

being better qualified to use them judiciously. Finally, in order to have a firm hold on as much of the property of the laity as possible, that they might live in the style of princes, and cope with the civil rulers to better advantage, about A. D. 350, the ecclesiastics began to teach and enjoin the doctrine in the local churches, but did not secure the full sanction therefor, until the second council of Tours, in A. D. 567.

Long before the doctrine of tithing had made any serious inroad in the Christian church, the ruling ecclesiastics had so far fallen from the simplicity of the gospel, the meekness of the Master, that when assembled in the great councils of the church, their actions and methods were worse than anything we can in this later day well conceive as possible among a body of men assembled for business purposes, without reference to the claims of the Christian religion. The condition of religion, morals and the general character of the councils of the early church may be best described in

the words of Dean Milman in his History of Latin Christianity. He says:

"It might have been supposed that nowhere would Christianity appear in such commanding majesty as in a council, which should gather from all quarters of the world the most eminent prelates and the most distinguished clergy; that a lofty and serene piety would govern all their proceedings, profound and dispassionate investigation exhaust every subject; human passions and interest would stand rebuked before that awful assembly; the sense of their own dignity as well as the desire of impressing their brethren with the solemnity and earnestness of their belief would at least exclude all intemperance of manner and language. Mutual awe and mutual emulation in Christian excellence would repress, even in the most violent, all unchristian violence. Their conclusions would be grave, mature, harmonious, for if not harmonious the confuted party would hardly acquiesce in the wisdom of their decrees; even their condemnations would be so tempered with

charity as gradually to win back the wanderer to the still open fold, rather than drive him, proscribed and branded, into inflexible and irreconcilable schism. History shows the melancholy reverse. Nowhere is Christianity less attractive, and, if we look to the ordinary tone and character of the proceedings, less authoritative, than in the councils of the church. It is in general a fierce collision of two rival factions, neither of which will yield, each of which is solemnly pledged against conviction. Intrigue, injustice, violence, decisions on authority alone, and that the authority of a turbulent majority, decisions by wild acclamation rather than after sober inquiry, detract from the reverence, and impugn the judgments, at least of the later councils. The close is almost invariably a terrible anathema, in which it is impossible not to discern the tones of human hatred, of arrogant triumph, of rejoicing at the damnation imprecated against the humiliated adversary. Even the venerable council of Nicea commenced with mutual accusals and

recriminations, which were suppressed by the moderation of the emperor; and throughout the account of Eusebius there is an adulation of the imperial convert, with something of the intoxication, it might be of pardonable vanity, at finding themselves the objects of royal favor, and partaking in royal banquets. But the more fatal error of that council was the solicitation, at least the acquiescence in the infliction of a civil penalty, that of exile, against the recusant prelates. The degeneracy is rapid from the council of Nicea to that of Ephesus, where each party came determined to use every means of haste, maneuver, court influence, bribery, to crush his adversary where there was an encouragement of, if not an appeal to the violence of the populace; to anticipate the decrees of the council; where each had his own tumultuous foreign rabble to back his quarrel; and neither would scruple at any means to obtain the ratification of their anathemas through persecution by the civil government. * * * Christianity, which

had so nobly asserted its independence of thought and faith in the face of heathen emperors, threw down that independence at the foot of the throne, in order that it might forcibly extirpate the remains of paganism, and compel an absolute uniformity of Christian faith."

The dogmatic utterances of councils made up and conducted as were those of the early church, as above described, can with but ill grace be held up as of any binding authority, among the protestants of these latter days.

Emboldened as they were by every new success in their grasp after power, temporal as well as spiritual, and seeing the need of strong retinues of retainers in order to overawe and overpower any incipient opposition, the bishops realized that in order to cope successfully with the civil power they must have large and corpulent treasuries at hand and devised the plan of re-enacting the worn out, cast off system of a compulsory tithing, as the bounden duty of all the faithful. From this there was but a step

to the enforcement of the civil law for the collection of tithes for the support of the state church, which became the rule under the reign of Charlemagne in the 9th century. The law thus established is the rule in all the countries of Europe, with the exception of France, which under the regime of the republic has been able to rid herself of this obnoxious statute. As practiced in England for the support of the established church, rich and poor, saint and sinner, churchman and dissenter alike must pay the rates, even to the taking of the last pig or cow, or the scant furniture from the humble dwelling. On the miseries of the poor of the sea girt isle, the lordly bishops revel in splendor, with incomes from the tithing rates which are ground with unrelentless hand from those who have not the slightest sympathy with the form of religion which takes the bread from their children's mouths for the glorification of men who but rarely preach the gospel to the poor, for whom Christ said that it was specially prepared, who evince little sympathy for the

oppressions which are weighing down their humble flocks, and which they are carrying out under the claim that it is in furtherance of the spread of the gospel of Christ among men. The crimes committed in the name of Christ and his gospel, during the centuries since the advent, make the heart sick at the recital.

Ecclesiasticism, which in America has heretofore been under restraint, is now again asserting its greed for power which can only be hoped for when the funds under control are such as to overbear opposition, and the doctrine is put forth that payments into the denominational coffers is a "giving to the Lord," with the farther declaration that since the Hebrews were commanded to bring one-tenth of their increase to the sanctuary, it is the duty of modern Christians to set apart one-tenth of their incomes and pay the same into the denominational treasury for the furtherance of the spread of the gospel, while the clerics devise the objects for which the funds shall be used in

such manner as to aggrandize their special denomination.

In the teachings of Christ, not one word can be found in support of the claim put forth, nor indeed, in the teachings of the epistles. While Christ made it very plain that our earthly substance belongs to God, His rule for its use is at a very great remove from any of our modern methods. Christ's church is not, nor ever was an organized body. Religious societies are no doubt a necessity to the building up of believers in their most holy faith and to the propagation of the truth; but the Christian has no right, under the plain teaching of the gospels, to turn over the sum total of his giving into the hands and judgment of any man or set of men. The only emphatic Christian giving, the only giving to the Lord recognized by our Lord, is giving to the poor; and it is doubtful if this can at all be done by proxy. As Christian men and women, it is no doubt our duty to share in our denominational enterprises, to give according to our means to the distribution

of the bible, the aid of home and foreign missions, and for the work of the society to which we belong; but it is our especial duty to hold ourselves ready at all times to distribute to the poor with no stingy hand. Christ has assured us of His special favor for this class of giving; for any other, He has made us no promises.

It is now proper to claim that tithing is not only not in any way enjoined in the scriptures, but it is contrary to the spirit of the new dispensation. Tithing, under the Mosaic code, was an inseparable part of the system of salvation by works, and the sacrifices on the altar. The sacrifice of Christ upon the cross forever closed the making of offerings for sin, and at the same time closed the duties of the Levitical service. The tithes were not divertible to any other purpose; unless given to the Levites, they cannot be recognized at all as a gift to God. Neither, indeed, can they be so recognized, unless offered in the sanctuary as a heave offering. The law itself allowed no substitutions for its forms and ceremonies. With

the close of the Aaronic priesthood, the Levitical service was forever closed as well. Tithing, as taught, is in furtherance of ecclesiasticism, which in all ages has been one of the chief elements which have made for unrighteousness and has hindered the spread of personal piety among the people. Christ's teachings not only ignore it as a duty of his followers, but the giving which He enjoined is incompatible therewith. It is an attempted resuscitation of the wrangles of the early church for and against conformity to the law in order to salvation. As is tritely said in one of the best and latest of the cyclopedias, "Tithes * * * are no part of New Testament legislation." If this be true they should have no place in the life of the followers of Christ.

There is one other and important consideration which should not be overlooked. The command to the Hebrews that they bring one-tenth of their annual increase unto the sanctuary, was coupled with the promise that while they were obedient to

this command their crops and herds should not fail to produce bountifully; and it seems impossible for the human mind to dissociate the promise of good to accrue to the giver, as a result of the giving. It matters not how honestly one may try to do so, any *system* of giving must take the form of buying or earning from God the earthly good we crave. But the Christian rule appears to be "do good and lend, hoping for nothing again." The moment the resolution is formed for the following out a systematic method of giving, just that moment the individual attempts to form a contract with his Maker similar to the one made by Jacob, when he vowed that, "*If* God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God;" the exact equivalent to saying that if the conditions are not complied with, the Lord should not be his God.

He who believes in the life, death on the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and

who hopes through the merit of His sacrifice to be saved from his sins and made a partaker of an endless life, certainly has no right to make bargains with the Lord relative to any earthly good, since we are assured on the word of Christ himself, that Our Father watches over and cares for our every need. The very essence of the rule of Christian giving is contained in the words of Christ, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

The Rule of Christian Giving.

The Rule of Christian Giving:

A BIBLE STUDY.

BY

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The Rule of Christian Giving.

"IF THOU WILT BE PERFECT, GO, SELL THAT THOU HAST, AND GIVE TO THE POOR, AND THOU SHALT HAVE TREASURE IN HEAVEN."—Matthew xix, 21.

The Mosaic and christian rules for the giving ot our substance to the Lord, are as variant as are those for the remission of sins; the former required of the penitent that he offer up on the altar located by divine authority, a bullock without spot or blemish; the latter, that he who feels himself a sinner, and lost to all eternity unless saved by the divine mercy, make personal use of the atonement made by the death of the Christ upon the cross.

The law of giving, under the Mosaic code, required that the whole nation of the Hebrews should give to the tabernacle, and afterwards, to the temple service, one-tenth of all their increase, each year; which tenth

was to be supplemented by such free will offerings as the heart of the worshiper might prompt. Added to all this, the law enjoined the most liberal giving of alms and aid to the poor.

For the giving of a law of this kind, he who will look into the history of the race and especially of the Jewish people, will find ample reason. At the time of the exodus from Egypt, the Hebrews were a barbarous people, entirely unfitted to comprehend anything in the nature of a spiritual religion. During their four hundred years of semi-slavery they had advanced not nearly as far in their mental growth and conceptions, as had the peoples about them, and in order to win them over to the worship of the one true God, to make of them a nation and gain time for mental development and moral growth, the Most High saw fit to arrange for them a religion of works and pageantry, whose splendor far eclipsed any of the idolatrous religions of those eastern nations.

In order to the carrying out of this design for an ostentatious religion, which no doubt

was intended to have its influence on the surrounding peoples, as well as the Jews themselves, a whole tribe, in addition to the families of the priesthood, was set apart for the carrying on of the multifarious duties of the temple service. With no landed inheritance among their brethren, and their labor devoted to the temple service, it was not only fitting, but it was in accord with the customs of the idolatrous nations, as well, that the tribe of Levi should receive their support from their brethren in return for their service in matters of religion. Nor, indeed, is it strange that the Jews were sharply warned that any failure on their part to comply with this law requiring the prompt contribution of one-tenth of their increase to be brought to the temple for the maintenance of the priests and Levites, would be reprimanded by a failure of their crops; while the promise was made firm to them that an honest observance of this requirement should be followed by bursting granaries. One of the very interesting studies of the Old Testament history, is to

note the fulfillments of these warnings and promises.

With the crucifixion and death of Christ, the Mosaic law was superseded by the law of love, which has neither Levitical rite, temple service or human priesthood. Christ, himself, having declared that he had come to fulfill the law and the prophets, just before he yielded up his spirit to the power of death, exclaimed, "It is finished." He had made the one great atonement for sin, he had fulfilled all the requirements of the law as given to Moses, and its rites, ceremonies and obligations were without farther efficacy. With his declaration that "It is finished," the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, thus making ready for the new dispensation, under which each individual may himself enter into the holiest, by a new and living way, without intervention of priest or Levite.

The temple service being done away, the priesthood of the house of Aaron being abolished by that infinitely greater priest-

hood of the Christ, there ceased, also, any to whom the tithes under the law should be paid, and for whose benefit they should accrue. The careful reader of the fifteenth chapter of Acts, will observe that the apostles and elders, sitting in solemn judgment as to the claim of the Mosaic law upon those who were not born thereunder, declared that it had no force or effect, and plainly absolved them from any obligation resulting therefrom. The Apostle Peter, after declaring that the disciples of Christ were exempt from the law, exclaimed, "Now, therefore, why tempt ye God, that ye should put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we are able to bear?" James, the leader and, as is believed, the chairman of the apostolic college, put in words the command of the conference, and the letter sent out to the disciples in all the countries where Paul had so wonderfully wrought for the gospel of Christ, contains the following pointed words:

"Forasmuch as we have heard that cer-

tain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, 'be circumcised and keep the law;' to whom we gave no commandment: * * * For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden then these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication, from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well." The law of Moses was wholly cast aside, and only those things enjoined which were necessary to cut them off from any participation in the worship of the idols to which they had been accustomed.

.The epistle to the Galatians is the masterly plea of a man trained to careful thought and argument, to show that the disciples of Christ are in no manner amenable to the rules of conduct laid down in the Mosaic code. Speaking of the law, Paul says in the fifth chapter of Galatians, "With freedom did Christ set you free; stand fast, therefore, and be not entangled in the

yoke of bondage." And again, "Behold, I, Paul, say unto you, that if ye receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing. Yea, I testify again to every man that receiveth circumcision, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." If now, those who are circumcised are debtors to the whole law, those who are believers in the atonement of Christ and have been made partakers of its benefits, are exempt from that law. For Paul says in another place, "ye are not under the law, but under grace."

The gospel of Christ abolished, with an absolute certainty, every semblance of a religion of works—a religion which ascribed merit to the doing of right things. The contributing of one-tenth of one's income to the purposes and plans of an ecclesiastical corporation is, and can only be, an act for which the giver claims for himself credit, and in return for which he is ready to demand from the God he assumes to have

served, the recompense which he thinks he has deserved. Those who compel themselves to this class of giving, under the mistaken apprehension that the gospel requires it of them, very rarely fail, when asked for the reason for the faith that is in them, to quote fluently from the promises of good to follow such giving, which they find in the law and the prophets of the Old Testament dispensation. They seem to fail of due comprehension of the fact, so clearly set forth in the epistle to the Galatians that he who has accepted Christ as his sacrifice for sin, is free from the duties pertaining to the ceremonial law, and that any assumption of those duties is an attempt to win the favor of God by right doing, and is moreover a denial of his faith in the Redeemer of the world. He who pays tithes (one-tenth of his yearly income), into the treasury of a religious corporation, is in duty bound to approach the altar and the robed priest with a bullock which is without blemish, and laying his hand upon the head of the victim, implore God to have mercy

upon him by virtue of the blood there to be shed; and after the priest has slain the dumb beast and laid the parts thereof upon the altar, prostrate himself there before the Lord, and ask again the pardon he seeks through and by virtue of his offering. Such an one is but attempting to purchase for himself blessings from heaven by means of cash paid into the treasury.

It is next proper to enquire what may be learned from the words of Christ himself as to what should be the manner, amount, and who or what the recipients of our giving.

The gospel of Christ is a dispensation of love, and not of set taxes; but the responsibilities of the would-be follower of Christ are vastly greater than those under the Mosaic law, which made it possible for one to sit down and compute as a simple arithmetical problem, the amount he should give in order to square accounts with the God he professes to worship; while under the law of love to God and man, the amount is indeterminate and well nigh unlimited. "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with

a price." Now if we are not our own, we own nothing. If we are Christ's, what we may have in possession is His also.

The *manner* of christian giving is explicitly laid down in the sixth chapter of Matthew's gospel, verses 1–4, and 19–21. In the making of our gifts "for Christ's sake," we are not to let our left hand know what our right hand doeth; in other words there is to be the very least possible publicity. It is fully enough that God shall know what and with what intent the act has been done. But we are assured that those who give publicly, or even ostentatiously, "have their reward." We are left to infer what that reward may be, but from the tone of our Lord's words we can but surmise that it is not a reward to be sought by a loving disciple of Christ—the plaudits of the gaping crowd. There is certainly no good reason to expect God's blessing to follow the making of gifts, bequests, donations or contributions which are heralded in the public prints, shouted down from the pulpit to the audience, announced from the

audience to the pulpit that brother so and so gives so much, or by pledges on subscription papers. The object may be a worthy one, but the moment the contribution thereto is so placed as to gain for the giver the praise of men, that praise and that alone is our reward. It is evident from Christ's words that he will not enter into partnership with any in the rewards for giving. If the gift is made in public or in a way to become public, the reward therefor is to be the human one of appreciation on the part of one's fellows; but if the reward sought is the blessing of God in the heart and life, the gift must be so made as that none other than God and the recipient of your bounty are cognizant of the act.

It seems proper to remark that not unfrequently, honest, earnest christians are cheated out of the rich blessings in store for the free and cheerful giver, by the methods pursued by those who as christian teachers ought to know and do better, in the raising of funds for the promotion of the various "causes" which are the thought and care of

the christian world. These men do not allow of any privacy in giving, but each contributor is used as a fulcrum to lift others to the point of following the example. All these methods are in direct conflict with both the letter and spirit of Christ's words. If we would have the approval of God and Him alone, our giving must be in secret. But if we thus give, we have his immutable word that we shall be rewarded openly. The spirit of personal emulation in giving, which is encouraged and indeed cultivated by many men who have taken the solemn vows of the christian ministry, is in direct conflict with the word of the Christ they profess to preach, and lays them open to the charge of obtaining money under false pretenses; for they assure those whom they urge to give publicly, and in a manner to in some sort compel others to give, that they are sure to be the recipients of the divine blessing in return for their good deed, while Christ taught an entirely different doctrine.

With true and earnest love toward God

and men, distribute of your means freely and without stint, in such manner as that none other than God and the recipients of your bounty are cognizant of the act, and you will become aware of a warmth in your hearts—a strange and delightful warmth—which will inform you of the blessedness of following the commands of Christ, even in such details as this.

The amount to be given, or rather contributed to the service of the Redeemer of the world, is to be measured only by the hold which one's possessions have upon his heart. The demands of Christ upon his disciples are vastly in excess of the demands made by the law of Moses. There can be no such limit fixed as the payment of one-tenth of one's increase. In the case of the young ruler mentioned by three of the evangelists, Christ saw that his possessions had such a hold upon him that it was necessary that he should sell *all* that he had, and distribute the proceeds to the poor. It seems well nigh impossible for us to be possessed of any amount of earthly good

without having it so much in thought and heart as that it forms a barrier so impenetrable that the love for Christ which he requires us to show by our acts to our fellow men, is totally unable to reach us. We are extremely restive under the command, "Give to him that asketh of thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away."

The absolute rule as to the amount which each servant of the Lord, Christ, should contribute of his substance which has been placed in his hands, is, as we may well apprehend, only to be limited by the opportunities for so contributing. But we should carefully beware that we are not blind or deaf to any opportunity, possible opportunity, to prove our love for Christ by our love for our fellow men. In measuring the amount of your return to God of the good things He has placed in your hands—the volume of your love to the Redeemer—it would be well to keep in view the thought underlying the awful malediction pronounced by our Lord against those who fail

to find and relieve the objects of his special care and solicitude. The words will be found in the closing verses of the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew:

"Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

"For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

"I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not."

"Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me."

In view of the teachings of the leaders of christian thought all along through the last sixteen centuries, as to the proper objects and methods for christian giving, it is not a little strange that not one word can be found either in the gospels or the epistles in consonance with that teaching. There is grave reason to suspect that this false teaching had its inception and birth in still another false and misleading doctrine,

namely, the glorification of the "church"—the organized church—which assumed and hence still assumes to direct and control all religious thought and action. Out of this idea of the ultimate control of the christian life of the believers by the organized church, which as a necessity to its existence must have untold and well nigh unlimited stores of wealth, came the demand of the leaders, that the church must be the medium for all christian giving; the plausible claim being set forth that by means of organization the gifts of those who contributed of their goods "for Christ's sake," could be made much more beneficial to the recipients; and further, that the organization could best determine what were the worthy objects of benefaction. These unscriptural ideas had obtained so firm a hold on the christian world that even the earthquake shock of the reformation of the sixteenth century was unable to do more than to loosen the foundations. In strange contradiction to the declaration of the Apostle Peter that it was not meet for the apostles, whose business

it was to preach remission of sins through faith in Christ's atonement, that they should leave the word of God and serve tables, the ecclesiastics of every century since the sixth, and probably even an earlier date than that, have eagerly sought and grasped for opportunity to wring from those who were under their sway the very last possible penny, in order that they might have the handling thereof for the glorification of "the church," and with not a little suspicion that coupled with their greed in this direction was something of a personal ambition. When you can return aught of His blessings to you to the Lord, make sure that they pass through no second hand as your almoner. Be your own purveyor of good to the poor and the needy, the sick and the sorrowful.

The careful student of the four gospels cannot well fail to be impressed with the fact that the poor were the first care and thought of the Christ. He not only declared that his special mission was to preach the gospel to the poor, but as often as oppor-

tunity offered, he enforced the injunction to give to the poor. So much is this the case, that while the gospels all abound in pleas and commands that we give to the poor, there is not one word or suggestion, even, that we give to any other object.

The christian believer, he who hopes by the merit of the atonement to be saved from the results and effects of sin, and who desires to be conformed to the mind and will of Christ, cannot but feel that he should use the earthly good which has been placed in his hands in such manner as to merit the approval of Him in whom he trusts as his Redeemer. He may almost be said to intuitively feel that what he has is lent from the Lord, and must very largely be returned to Him in such manner as will return him the most ample blessing. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto me."

For the reason then, that Christ makes mention of but one object of giving by his servants, and so repeatedly enforces that one, it becomes proper to assume and assert,

without fear of successful contradiction, that there is but one object of essentially christian giving, and that one is giving to the poor. It may be remarked that had Christ recognized other objects as worthy of notice, he would not have commanded the young ruler who is said to have been very rich, to sell all that he had and give to the poor. If he had regarded other objects as worthy, he could not well have failed to provide for a division of the large estate among the several worthy objects.

We have, in the New Testament, an account of the taking of but one collection, and that one was solely and distinctly for the poor. The particulars in regard to this may be found in Romans, XV, 25–27, and 1st Corinthians, XVI, 1–4. The number of the disciples at Jerusalem who were poor, was very large; this fact being brought to the attention of the christians throughout Greece and Asia Minor, they arranged to ends them a handsome contribution, for which Paul expressed his strong approbation. But even his words are not infre-

quently tortured into a text to uphold the doctrine of systematic giving, while he only requests that in order to avoid the gathering together of their gifts when he should arrive to dispatch their benevolence to its destination, they lay aside each week until his arrival, such sums as they are disposed to contribute. This was for a special purpose and a special time, and Paul makes no mention of any thought that it should be continued farther than the somewhat indefinite time when he would arrive to assist in the sending their gift away.

The primitive church, to use the word in its common acceptation, was an unorganized body, and we may well believe that the body of which Christ and the apostles spoke, was in their minds, the whole body of faithful believers, scattered and unorganized. Our English word "church," is directly derived from a Greek word, but that word cannot be found in the New Testament writings. The word which our translators have rendered "church," signifies "assembly." But an assembly was an unorganized

body—a public gathering. The assembly could choose its own officers, and transact certain kinds of business, but it was without power to enforce its will against even those who participated in its doings. The *ekklesia*, or assembly of the first and second centuries, was very nearly, as far as the matter of organization was concerned, like the political party organizations of the United States. Each separate assembly agreed upon those things which seemed necessary to itself. As the years went by, this method was found to be inadequate for protection from a great variety of evils which of necessity were inherent therein. Gradually, organization became more and more complete, until at last the organization became the whole thing. The bishops, who at the first had been simply the pastors of the various assemblies, assumed the authority to determine, *ex cathedra*, the doctrines which should be received and taught, and then, with the building of churches and the necessary entailment of expenses connected therewith, the demand that the moneys contributed by

the assemblies for the various purposes should be entrusted to them for distribution in accordance with their judgment, and not at all at the option of the givers. Thus, gradually, there was a drawing away from the prime conception of personal giving in secret, and instead thereof, a public contribution to a common fund, over which the contributors had no voice or control. A little later, the clergy came to demand not merely gifts, but such sums as they deemed to be in the power of the communicants to pay, so that when Luther began his onslaughts on the papal power, the people were under a bondage of church taxation, and that too, wholly irresponsible, which exceeded even that imposed by their civil rulers.

We might reasonably expect that following the reformation we should find a real return to the rule of christian giving laid down in the New Testament; but in this we are unhappily disappointed. The seeming necessities for organization of the protestant churches, the need of meeting houses

with all the attendant expenses, coupled with the inherent laziness of the average man, and which leads him to prefer to do his good deeds by proxy, rather than to hunt up the poor, the sick, the distressed, and succor them with his own hand, has resulted in the soothing of the consciences of those who feel that they must give to Christ of their substance, by the placing of what they give in the treasury of the society to which they belong, in such manner and for such general purposes as the clergy assure them are proper, and leaving to themselves no further part or lot in the matter. But of the millions annually contributed in our American churches what a meager per cent is for the poor. The collection basket passes around at every public service, at frequent intervals a special "cause" is presented, the various congregations vie with one another in the amount of their contributions, but the poor, the ones who are Christ's special care, the ones he repeatedly declared we should always have with us, to whom, as personating Himself, we are com-

manded to give our thought and special care, these are easily relegated to the poor house or the poor master, to be cared for by the public taxes, while our richest gifts must be reserved for the "causes" which our denomination has devised for its glorification.

Paying our proper proportion to the expenses of the religious society to which we have attached ourselves, is not, nor can it be so made by any stretch of sophistry however great, a giving to the Lord, or an act of worship and adoration of the Christ. All such expenses are incurred for our own benefit and comfort. We might worship in a building of such plain exterior and severe interior as that it cost but five instead of fifty thousand dollars; we might put up with tallow dips for light, instead of gas or electricity, we might sit on hard benches without backs instead of in pews with good cushions, we might carry our own foot stoves to meeting, after the manner of our ancestors, and thus do away with the expensive steam heating. But we much

prefer to follow the method of gratifying our ideas of taste and comfort in our meeting houses, and the making them as comfortable and attractive as our homes. Very well. But when we put our hands deep in our pockets to pay the expenses for this comfort, we are not serving God one whit more than when we build a home for the comfort and convenience of our families. A christian man has a right to expect the blessing of God when he pays his honest debts, and when he shares in the expenses of a comfortable place in which his family may worship God with their christian friends, he is entitled to and will receive the same kind of a blessing. It is no doubt true, also, that the sums we pay for the maintenance of our pastors, are no more given to the Lord than are the payments we make to the family doctor or the grocer. They are on an equality. This fact may be seen from the reading of 1st Timothy, V. 17: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in word and doctrine." The

Greek word which is here rendered "honor," has only by indirect inference any reference to our idea of respect, but is the equivalent of the Latin "honorarium," which is essentially, a recompense, a fee. When Paul told Timothy that the elder who ruled well was worthy of a double honor, Timothy understood him as saying that such an one was worthy of a double salary. Now the payment of a salary is not a gift to the individual, nor is it giving to the Lord. The same may fairly be said of all our contributions to the maintenance of the religious society with which we are connected, and the various "causes" the society has seen fit to promote. We sought admission thereto in the hope that we might be benefited thereby in our own persons, and that we might thus be able to do more for the upbuilding of Christ's kingdom among men. It is but acting the part of an honest man to share fairly and equitably, in accordance with our means, in the expenses which are necessary and proper for the society, as long as we share its benefits. The same rule

holds as with any organization, literary, social, or other, which admits us to membership. But in any of these we are not giving to the Lord, either the religious society or the social club, any farther than it is the duty and pleasure of every earnest christian, whatsoever he does, to do all to the glory of God.

It is scarce possible, in polite language, to characterize with sufficient sharpness and invective, the claim so often made in many pulpits, that the act of giving, by putting our something into the collection basket, is an act of worship. This claim might have a trifle of a show of standing if the collection was for the poor of the society; but since the ordinary collection is for the running expenses of the society, the claim borders closely on profanity. God is not worshiped with money, and the payment of our debts or our share of the expense of giving ourselves a comfortable place in which to bow in prayer and listen to the reading of the holy oracles, is not an act of worship. For, as Paul declared in his sermon on Mars

hill, of the one true God, Jehovah, "Neither is worshiped with men's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he giveth to all life, breath and all things."

If then, we would follow the rules which Christ plainly set forth, let us serve Him by serving our fellow men, remembering the blessing, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." * * * "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me." But do not fail to remember that in all your acts of love and obedience to Christ, all your doing and loving are to be in secret. The principle seems to be the same as in his rules for prayer: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret." Your acts of love and devotion should be as those of lovers, who shrink from the slightest publicity. If you would be very close to Christ, and know him intimately, it would seem to be absolutely necessary to

be very careful in your observance of all those rules which He has given us relative to communion with Him.

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.

"Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

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